



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A 1,004,011

ESSAYS  
BY ROBERT  
MARQUESS OF  
SALISBURY  
1801-1864

BIOGRAPHICAL









22

**ESSAYS BY THE  
MARQUESS OF SALISBURY, K.G.**







Engr. R. & S. Col.

Henry Tanworth.

*Lord Robert Cecil  
afterwards 3rd Marquess of Salisbury.*

# ESSAYS

BY THE LATE

MARQUESS OF SALISBURY,<sup>Post</sup>  
*Arthur Talbot Gascoyne - Cecil, 3d marquess.*  
K.G.

I

## BIOGRAPHICAL

NEW YORK  
E. P. DUTTON & CO.  
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET  
1905



George Edmunds R. & R.

Printed by J. D. C.

*Lord Robert Cecil  
afterwards 3<sup>d</sup>. Marquess of Salisbury*

ESSAYS

BY THE LATE

MARQUESS OF SALISBURY,<sup>R.H.</sup>

*Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, 3d Marquess.*

K.G.

1

BIOGRAPHICAL

NEW YORK  
E. P. DUTTON & CO.  
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

1905



Engraved by R. & D. D.

London 1850

Lord Robert Cecil  
afterwards 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Salisbury

ESSAYS

BY THE LATE

MARQUESS OF SALISBURY,<sup>R.H.</sup>

*Arthur Talbot Gascoyne. Dec 7, 1869 - 1904.*

K.G.

BIOGRAPHICAL

NEW YORK  
E. P. DUTTON & CO.  
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

1905



Engraved by J. C. St. John  
from a drawing by R. A. Del

*Lord Robert Cecil  
afterwards 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Salisbury*

ESSAYS

BY THE LATE

MARQUESS OF SALISBURY,<sup>P.R.E.</sup>

*Arthur Talbot Gascoyne - Cecil, 3rd Marquess.*

K.G.

[1]

BIOGRAPHICAL

NEW YORK  
E. P. DUTTON & CO.  
31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

1905

A  
64  
2  
25  
. 1

*Printed in Great Britain*

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,  
LONDON AND BECCLES.

## NOTE

THE essays in these volumes were among the articles contributed by Lord Salisbury to the *Quarterly Review* in the years 1861 to 1864, when the author was Conservative Member for Stamford, and before he had been in office. The Editor desires to express his thanks to the proprietors of that Review for permission to reprint them.

The Notes not in brackets appeared in the original articles; for the others the present Editor is responsible.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
LORD CASTLEREAGH	I
STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT—I	71
STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT—II	135

## ILLUSTRATION

LORD ROBERT CECIL, M.P. (afterwards 3rd  
Marquess of Salisbury) ... ... ... *Frontispiece*  
*From a crayon drawing by George Richmond, R.A.*



LORD CASTLEREAGH

## PREFATORY NOTE

THIS essay was published in the *Quarterly Review* for January, 1862. To it was prefixed the following list of authorities :—

1. Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir Charles Stewart. By Sir Archibald Alison. London. 1861.
2. Correspondence, Despatches, and other papers of Viscount Castlereagh. Edited by his Brother. Third Series. London. 1856.
3. Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire. Par M. Thiers. Vols. xviii., xix. Paris. 1861.
4. Supplementary Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Arthur Duke of Wellington. Vol. viii. London. 1861.

It may be convenient to append here the principal dates of Lord Castlereagh's career. Born 1769. Irish Privy Seal, 1797. Pitt's Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1799–1801, and as such passed the Union through the Irish Parliament. In 1802 President of Board of Control, and in 1805 War and Colonial Office as well. Resigned on Pitt's death in 1806. In 1807 War Secretary again. Responsible for Walcheren Expedition in 1809, and in same year fought duel with Canning and resigned. From 1812 to 1822 Foreign Secretary, and till 1821 leader of the House of Commons. British Representative in the Coalition of 1814, and at the Congress of Vienna 1814–15. Passed the Six Acts in 1819. In 1821 became Lord Londonderry, and committed suicide in 1822.

## LORD CASTLEREAGH

WE are accustomed in the present day to strange historical rehabilitations, and to the reversal of all our traditional ideas upon the guilt or virtue of the great men of the past. But it seems hard to believe that this process should be already necessary in the case of a statesman whose career is so recent as Lord Castlereagh's. Yet the mythical mist which rises under the influence of the strong passions of party had already gathered round his name before he had ceased to live. He was even then associated in the minds of a large part of the community with a cause for which he had no sympathy; charged with the responsibility of measures which he had done his best to avert; and vilified for hostility to the liberties of mankind which it had been the main work of his life to vindicate. The energies of a whole school of political writers were devoted to the task of persuading his countrymen that he was the English representative of the Holy Alliance, and an accomplice in every freak of tyranny that was perpetrated from Warsaw to Cadiz. Even after his labours in his country's service had brought his life to a premature and terrible close, the animosity of his enemies did not relent. They had many things to

## LORD CASTLEREAGH

avenge which political partisans are slow to forgive. He had not only excluded them for many years from power, but he had succeeded in spite of the prophecies of evil with which they had pursued his policy. He had attained the objects which they had declared impracticable, and carried through to a glorious triumph the measures which they had stigmatized as imbecile. Forced to admit the success of his policy, they were driven to avenge themselves upon his motives. Against criticism of this kind a statesman who has the foreign policy of an empire to conduct is almost defenceless. The obscurity in which diplomatic transactions are necessarily shrouded will probably conceal from the public eye the circumstances upon which his justification rests. The necessity of sparing the feelings of powerful monarchs or ministers elsewhere, and of hiding the faults or follies of men whom it would be injurious to English interests to offend, often forces him to be silent, where silence is interpreted by his enemies as confession. Lord Castlereagh was not the man to jeopardize the meanest English interest for the sake of refuting some calumniator of his own good name. The tyranny of the southern monarchies, and the assumptions of the Holy Alliance, had aroused an abundance of bitter and resentful feeling among educated Englishmen. It was easy to persuade men that the minister who always, as became his office, spoke in public with courtesy of the Allies of England, shared their maxims of government, and acquiesced in their policy to secondary states. The impression was strengthened by the measures of domestic repression which it fell to him to defend in the House of Commons, and which, even when

## ALLEGED HOSTILITY TO FREEDOM 5

levelled against assassination-plots, are always unpopular in England. Thus the belief that Lord Castlereagh was the arch enemy of freedom all over the world was widely spread, and came to be almost an article of faith with the school of writers and public men who prepared the English soil for the Reform Bill, and reaped its earliest fruits.

A lie, however, according to the Chinese proverb, has no legs, and in course of time this article of popular belief began to lose its footing. Those who once despairingly considered "a Whig administration to be about as probable as a thaw in Zembla," have since, by force of habit, come to look on themselves as possessing a kind of tenant-right to office. And this improvement in their political climate has effected an evident thaw in their sentiments. They feel towards calumniators of administrations and critics of foreign policy much as usurpers are said to feel to the tyrannicides to whom they owe their thrones. Moreover, the just Nemesis which generally decrees that partisans shall be forced to do in office precisely that which they most loudly decried in opposition, has not failed to dog the footsteps of Lord Castlereagh's detractors. Since the Whigs have passed Irish Arms Acts and suspended the Habeas Corpus Act,<sup>1</sup> their partisans have been less keen to infer from similar measures an inveterate hostility to freedom. And after the exposition which the model Republic has presented to the world of the duty of the

<sup>1</sup> [The Whig Governments of 1833, 1834, and 1848 passed or renewed Irish Coercion Acts, which included provisions for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Acts. Acts restricting the importation and use of arms in Ireland were also almost constantly in force from 1832 till the date of the Essay.]

friends of freedom in the presence of domestic revolt, we shall probably hear less for the future of Lord Castlereagh's milder measures of repression. Facts also have told heavily in his favour. Recent events have indisposed the mass of writers on the Liberal side to formulate so precisely as of old the wickedness of Transalpine powers interposing in the internal politics of Italy. No one now dreams of professing that sympathy for the extinguished nationalities of Norway and Genoa,<sup>1</sup> which formed the basis of so many bitter invectives against him five-and-forty years ago. And, after the experience of many revolutions, his hostility to the secret societies and socialist conspirators of the Continent is not viewed by Whig magnates with the uncompromising condemnation which they hurled at it in days when the disenchantment of politicians had not progressed as far as it has now.

We are inclined, therefore, to hope that Sir Archibald Alison is right in believing that the period is a favourable one for clearing up the delusions that prevail in respect to Lord Castlereagh's character and motives. It is time to substitute for the popular myth a juster estimate of the merits of the great statesman who bore the chief part in rescuing Europe from the modern "scourge of God." Sir Archibald has many qualifications for the task. The study of a lifetime has

<sup>1</sup> [It was part of the arrangements for the alliance against Napoleon, confirmed by the Treaty of Vienna, that Norway should be taken from Denmark and given to Sweden. In the same way the Republic of Genoa was absorbed in the kingdom of Sardinia. In each case the inhabitants strongly objected, and their causes were espoused by the English Opposition.]

made him familiar with the period of history to which it relates ; and since his History was composed, a considerable mass of new materials have been given to the world. There was room for a narrative which should work up the Castlereagh correspondence in a connected form, and present in an English dress the matter which M. Thiers's industry has disinterred from the archives at Paris. These documents he has welded into his biography with his usual painstaking elaboration ; and an additional interest is given to the work by a number of hitherto unpublished letters which he has been permitted to select from the papers of the late Lord Londonderry. An impartial biographer he cannot with accuracy be called, for his mind could hardly have escaped bias from the feelings with which he regarded those to whom Lord Castlereagh was dear. But his labours have all the heartiness of a labour of love, and their partiality is perhaps not out of place as a counterpoise to the efforts of those whose judgments have been warped by a bias more marked and less commendable. His brush opportunely fills in the lights that belonged to a character which so many writers have striven to paint in shadows almost unrelieved.

Lord Castlereagh filled several important positions, and took part in many great events ; but prudent panegyrists will confine their attention to his career as Foreign Secretary during the ten closing years of his life. It is upon them that his title to fame must exclusively rest. The other transactions in which he was mixed up hardly reflect much light upon his name. Whatever he was set to do, he did it well and honestly with all his might ; but it was not always that which suited

him the best, or in which the greatest credit was to be won. A certain admiration is due to skill in whatever occupation it is displayed, and therefore we cannot refuse to admire the skill with which he effected the Irish Union. But still we should prefer to dwell on any other display of administrative ability than that which consists of bribing knaves into honesty, and fools into common sense. It is perfectly true that we may fairly throw upon his superiors the responsibility of the policy that he was charged to carry out. In emergencies so critical as that which followed the rebellion of 1798, all faithful servants of the Crown were bound to set almost a military value upon the virtue of prompt obedience. And it is also true that we must try even the conduct of his superiors in some degree by a military test. In the supreme struggle of social order against anarchy, we cannot deny to the champions of civilized society the moral latitude which is by common consent accorded to armed men fighting for their country against a foreign foe. It is no reproach to a General on active service that he has used either bribes or spies in furtherance of his operations against the enemy. There are emergencies when the conspirator at home is more dangerous to all that society holds dear than any enemy abroad. No casuistry, however subtle, can draw a tenable line of distinction between the two cases, so that the weapon which is lawful for the soldier shall be forbidden to the statesman. A moment's reflection upon considerations such as these will serve to clear Lord Castlereagh's memory from any imputation in consequence of the part which he took in carrying into effect Mr. Pitt's great idea. The independence of

## IRISH AND WAR ADMINISTRATION 9

the Irish Parliament was a position from which it was absolutely indispensable to dislodge the enemy if the integrity of the empire was to be preserved. It naturally never occurred to him that he was doing anything contrary to morality or honour in bribing the garrison to open the gates. Still such employments are more inevitable than honourable; and the achievements to which they lead are not held to confer renown. He reaped a reward, richer than renown, in the blessings he conferred on the two nations whom he has made one. This generation, that has watched the growing prosperity of Ireland, and the calamities into which other empires have been plunged by co-ordinate and independent legislatures under one crown, ought to remember rather with gratitude than with cavil the manliness and fidelity with which he performed his distasteful office.

His war administration is another portion of Lord Castlereagh's career which his admirers would wish to pass over with a light hand. His selection of Sir Arthur Wellesley, over the heads of many older officers, to command the Spanish army, in spite of the murmurs of the lovers of routine, was an instance of that intuitive power of measuring men's intellects and hearts which afterwards gave him such a singular ascendancy in negotiation. But in the ordinary duties of his office he was not so happy. The Walcheren expedition was a heavy set-off on the other side. His strength did not lie in skilful administration. It is a gift possessed but by few, and very rarely possessed in conjunction with any breadth of political view. It was not, however, in such an office as this that his fame was to be won.

A War Minister must find his reward in his conscience or his salary: he must not look for fame. It is only a very pale and reflected glory that he will derive from a successful war. All the visible and palpable merit of a victory is the commander's, and few people bestow a thought upon the humble drudge in a London office who has schemed and toiled to furnish him with the materials for his splendid deeds. But, on the other hand, if there be a disaster, the importance of the War Office is immediately remembered. A commander must be strangely deficient in ingenuity if he cannot impute his mishap to some want of men, or money, or warlike materials; and for that want a discerning nation will always hold the War Minister to blame. No one dreams of attributing to Lord Liverpool<sup>1</sup> or Lord Bathurst<sup>2</sup> the faintest share in the triumphs of the Peninsula; but every one is agreed in giving to Lord Castlereagh full credit for the failure of the Walcheren expedition.

The unhappy quarrel with Mr. Canning—of which it may fairly be said that it was due less to the fault of either principal than to the mismanagement of their friends—proved indirectly of great service to Lord Castlereagh's fortunes.<sup>3</sup> Its indirect and ultimate effect was to remove him from the

<sup>1</sup> [War Minister from 1809 to 1812, when he became Prime Minister.]

<sup>2</sup> [He held various offices from 1804 till 1830, and among them that of Secretary for War and the Colonies in Lord Liverpool's Government formed in 1812.]

<sup>3</sup> [Castlereagh, believing that the desire for his removal from the War Office in 1809 was due to the intrigues of Canning, challenged him. In the duel Canning was wounded, and they both resigned office. When Castlereagh returned to office, two and a half years later, it was as Foreign Minister.]

War Office, for which he had little aptitude, to the Foreign Office, which was eminently suited to his peculiar talents. His gift was to manage men, whether as individuals or in masses. He displayed it on a small scale and in a baser sphere when he held office in Ireland. It showed itself in far grander proportions during the period in which, to use M. Thiers's expression, "he was England herself in the camp of the Coalition," and as such held the destiny of the Continent in his hands. It is with the year 1812 that his real greatness begins. It was a greatness of the kind that brings with it more of immediate than of posthumous fame. A diplomatist's services are recognized at the moment they are rendered. When a nation has waited with feverish anxiety for the result of long negotiations or the operations of some loosely-joined alliance, and they are at last conducted to a fortunate issue, the general feeling of relief finds vent in hearty gratitude to the successful diplomatist. When Lord Castlereagh returned from Vienna in 1814 the whole House of Commons rose to receive him as he came in. Even Mr. Whitbread's sleepless hostility was hushed for a moment, and he joined his unwilling tribute of admiration to the general applause. He only expressed the general feeling. The nation thoroughly appreciated the services which had brought so terrible a contest to a close; but its gratitude passed away with the enthusiasm of the moment. A diplomatist's glory is the most ephemeral of all the forms of that transient reward. There is nothing in his achievements which appeals to the imagination: nothing which art can illustrate, or tradition retain, or history portray. A military commander is more fortunate in his vocation. All

his achievements are a succession of dramatic effects ; each of his advantages is gained by one sudden and skilful blow ; the effort by which the destinies of whole nations are decided, and which puts to the uttermost test every quality of mind and heart, is concentrated into a few hours. The excitement is contagious to his countrymen who are spectators of his deeds, and to the posterity which reads of them. The narrative of the campaigns of the Great War is almost as fascinating now as it was when every reader felt that it might be his turn next to see his own earthly fortunes staked upon a battle, or to endure all the hopeless ruin which was expressed in the word "defeat." But there is nothing dramatic in the successes of a diplomatist. His victories are made up of a series of microscopic advantages : of a judicious suggestion here, of an opportune civility there ; of a wise concession at one moment, and a far-sighted persistence at another ; of sleepless tact, immovable calmness, and patience that no folly, no provocation, no blunders can shake. But there is nothing exciting in the exercise of excellences such as these. A list of such exploits lends no fascination to a narrative. Writers will not encumber their pages with a throng of minute circumstances, which are individually trivial, though in the aggregate they effect results of vast importance ; and readers would not be found to read them if they did. The result is that while the services of a commander are celebrated with almost undiminished enthusiasm from age to age, the services of a diplomatist fade rapidly away from a nation's memory. Lord Castlereagh's performances are therefore incapable, by their very nature, of being fully represented in

## MAINTENANCE OF THE COALITION 13

a narrative. It can only be said of him generally that he found Europe at war and that he left it at peace. The merit was far from being entirely his, and his share would be very difficult to apportion. The heaviest part of the burden fell upon the combatants. He could only pave the way for military triumphs, and put them to good use when they were won. Yet there can be no doubt that, in the operations of the Allies in 1813, 1814, the strategy was the weakest point and the diplomacy was the strongest. Napoleon was not crushed by generalship, but by overwhelming force; and it was to the skill of diplomatists that the concentration of that overwhelming force was due. If the conflict could have been decided by any conceivable exertion of military genius, the hesitating councils and sluggish tactics of the Allies would never have overborne Napoleon; but the disparity of resources was too enormous for any military skill to turn the scale. Drained as France was of men and money, it was a matter almost of calculation that, if the Allies could only be kept together, they must bear Napoleon to the earth at last. Everything depended, therefore, on the maintenance of the Coalition.

The marvellous victories of Napoleon during his last campaign between the Marne and the Seine sufficiently indicate what would have been the fate of the Allies if any great defection had considerably reduced the inequality of force. It was a campaign, therefore, which, at least in its later and more decisive portion, turned a great deal more upon the skill of diplomatists than of generals. The battle of European freedom was fought, not in the fields of Montmirail and Vauchamps,<sup>1</sup> but at the head-

<sup>1</sup> [February 11 and 13, 1814. By these two victories Napoleon

quarters of the Alliance. And it was a struggle of which the issue was often doubtful, and the maintenance always arduous. On more than one occasion the combination which was the last hope of liberation for Europe was on the point of crumbling to pieces. The Coalesced Powers were at one neither in the material objects they had in view, nor in the feelings with which they pursued the contest. Before the battle of Leipsic<sup>1</sup> a common instinct of self-preservation animated them all. But the intensity of this feeling sensibly diminished as Napoleon retreated from their frontiers. They began then to think more of re-capture than defence, more of what they should take from his weakness than what they should save from his aggression. Each coveted some one particular portion of the spoil, and was ready to risk the fortunes of the whole Alliance to secure it. Bernadotte, at the head of the Swedish forces, wanted Norway for his adopted country in the first instance, and Napoleon's crown for himself in the second. Alexander, whose contribution to the resources of the war fully justified him in claiming the lion's share of the booty, was resolved upon seizing the whole of Poland, and was not disinclined to show a condescending favour to the men of the Revolution and at the same time to secure to himself a lasting influence at the Tuileries, by selecting Bernadotte instead of Louis XVIII. to replace Napoleon. Neither of these aims was particularly pleasing, either to Austria or Prussia. It was only with difficulty that the Emperor Francis had been

with less than 30,000 men completely routed the Army of Silesia 50,000 strong.]

<sup>1</sup> [October 16 to 18, 1813.]

## DISAGREEMENTS OF THE ALLIES 15

induced to consent to the dethronement of his son-in-law, in case of his continued refusal of fair terms of peace; but his legitimist spirit repudiated with scorn the idea of abasing his own kindred in order to exalt another revolutionary soldier of meaner talents and baser origin. Nor could Austria agree to abandon to a rival, whom she dreaded at least as much as France, the strategic vantage-ground which the possession of the whole Polish frontier would give to Russia. The Prussians were in no mood to give much weight to considerations of mere policy. Their souls were filled with a thirst for vengeance, not only upon Napoleon, but upon France. They longed to repay themselves for all the barbarities which the French army had practised in Prussia, by inflicting upon the French nation the utmost possible humiliation, and devastating every province through which they passed. But so far as the all-absorbing passion left room for calmer calculations of policy, they were favourable, as legitimists, to the return of the Bourbons, and they looked upon the entire absorption of Poland by Russia with as much apprehension as the Austrians. The future disposal of Saxony was, in the same way, a bone of contention between Austria and Prussia. Bavaria had joined the Alliance tardily, and fought but coldly by its side, for she well knew that the abandonment of the Tyrol to Austria would be to her the chief result of the victories she should help to gain. There were also minor causes of disagreement. Bernadotte insisted on using his division of the Allied forces for the subjugation of his own particular enemy the King of Denmark, and absolutely declined to lead them across the frontier of France. By this plan

he hoped to aggrandize the Swedish crown, and at the same time to smooth the way to his own candidature for a French crown. But the Allies were naturally incensed at seeing the Russian and Prussian troops under his command diverted from the common cause, and employed in forwarding his own personal ambition. Then there were difficulties with the Prussians, because they would practise their system of devastation not only on the French population, who might, so far as mere policy was concerned, be safely abandoned to their tender mercies, but also on the inhabitants of the Rhenish and Belgian provinces, whom it was important to conciliate; difficulties with Alexander, whose policy varied from day to day between the opposite poles of chivalrous gentleness and fierce revenge, according as vanity or anger was uppermost in his mind; difficulties with Austria, who insisted on violating the Swiss territory, and restoring the old governments, in spite of Alexander's most solemn promises to the contrary.

All these differences, small and great, were perpetually threatening the very existence of the Coalition. Even during the uninterrupted course of prosperity which it enjoyed from the victory of Leipsic to the battle of Brienne,<sup>1</sup> the obvious divergences of interest between the several Allies could not be concealed. When they were on the point of entering France, and their hopes were at the highest, their meetings had become so warm, and the difficulties of their co-operation seemed so insuperable, that it was thought necessary to send out Lord Castlereagh to superintend in person the negotiations which threatened to lead to such

<sup>1</sup> [February 1, 1814.]

sinister results. Lord Aberdeen, in a letter written in order to hurry him, paints the difficulties of the situation in lively colours :—

“With relation to the enemy, our situation is as good as possible; among ourselves it is quite the reverse. Everything which has been so long smothered is now bursting forth. Your presence is absolutely providential. If you come without partiality and prejudice, as I make no doubt you do, in spite of all the pains taken to prevent it, you will be able to perform everything; and no words are sufficient to express the service you will render. I am most anxious that you should come.”—(*Lord Aberdeen to Lord Castlereagh, Jan. 6, 1814.*)

“The enemy is, in my view, a source of danger much less to be dreaded than what arises among ourselves. I cannot too often represent to you the real state of the minds of those weak men by whom Europe is governed. The seeming agreement at Langres covered distrust and hate. A little success will cement them again; but if they are to be severely tried in adversity, their dissolution is certain. Your presence has done much, and would, I have no doubt, continue to sustain them in misfortune; but without it they could not exist. It is not a bystander who speaks, but one who knows what their real feelings are, and who knows that they are actuated by feelings more than principles. In all events, I am heartily rejoiced you are in a situation to see and judge for yourself in all things. It will do you no harm to see and know the interior of a Coalition.”—(*Lord Aberdeen to Lord Castlereagh, Feb. 28, 1814.*)

It was upon England that the responsibility of adjusting these interminable disputes necessarily fell. She was the only power who was disinterested in the discussion of Continental arrangements, and whose lavish subsidies gave to her,

during the continuance of operations, a certain hold over all the Allies. And England was in effect

- Lord Castlereagh. The estimate of his influence, which is formed even by so unfavourable a judge as M. Thiers, may give an idea of the power which he really exercised :—

“ Le Cabinet Britannique se décida à envoyer le plus éminent de ses membres, Lord Castlereagh, auprès du Congrès ambulant de la Coalition pour y modérer les passions, y maintenir l'accord, y faire prévaloir les principaux vœux de l'Angleterre, et, ces vœux satisfaits, y voter en toute autre chose pour les résolutions modérées, contre les résolutions extrêmes. . . . Aucun homme n'était plus propre que Lord Castlereagh de remplir une pareille mission. Issu d'une famille Irlandaise, ardente et énergique, il portait en lui cette disposition héréditaire, mais tempérée par une raison supérieure. Esprit droit et pénétrant, caractère ferme et prudent, capable tout à la fois de vigueur et de ménagement, ayant dans ses manières la simplicité fière des Anglais, il était appelé à exercer, et il exerça en effet, la plus grande influence. Il était sur presque toutes choses muni de pouvoirs absous. Avec son caractère, avec ses instructions, on pouvait dire de lui que c'était Angleterre elle-même qui se déplacait pour se rendre au camp des coalisés. Personne n'eut voulu sans lui prendre un parti ou donner une réponse. C'était à qui le verrait, à qui l'entretiendrait le premier pour le gagner à sa cause.”

At a time when the happiness of all Europe depended on the will of half a dozen sovereigns and ministers, this personal ascendancy was of incalculable value. It enabled him, on more than one critical occasion, to avert disagreements or

## BULOW'S DIVISION SENT FOR 19

errors which would have been fatal to the liberation of the world. Two occasions deserve especially to be remembered. After the battle of Montereau<sup>1</sup> the situation of the Allies was very critical. Napoleon had shown them, not only that they were no match for him in equal fight, but that he could set at defiance even a considerable superiority of numbers. The odds against which he had been fighting were three to one at the very least ; and it had become quite evident from a succession of defeats that, unless they could bring up a larger force against him, the cause of the Allies, and with it the Coalition, were at an end. There was but one reinforcement within reach. A large body of Russians and Prussians, under Bülow and Winzingerode<sup>2</sup> were lying inactive in the Low Countries, because they belonged to the division which Bernadotte commanded ; and Bernadotte, with the vision of an Imperial crown glittering before his eyes, had made up his mind that no soldier under his orders should violate the old frontier of France. At the head-quarters at Bar-sur-Aube every one saw the peril, and knew the remedy. There was no dispute about the matter, that unless more troops could be brought up Napoleon must win ; and that the only escape from imminent disaster was to direct Bülow's division

<sup>1</sup> [February 18, 1814.]

<sup>2</sup> [Bülow, the Prussian General, was born 1755 and died 1816. In 1814 he was in command of the 3rd Prussian Corps under Bernadotte. Later he led the Prussian Corps that determined the victory at Waterloo.

Winzingerode, the Russian General, born in Wurtemberg in 1769 ; died 1818. A soldier of fortune, and at this time General of Cavalry in the Russian service, acting under the command of Bernadotte.]

to disregard the orders of Bernadotte, and to advance. But every one shrank from the danger of irritating the Crown Prince's unstable fidelity into open defection, and provoking him to fall upon the communications of the Allies. Alexander declared the difficulty to be insurmountable; and the majority of the council of war had already pronounced in favour of an immediate retreat. If their opinion had prevailed, it is not too much to say that Napoleon in a few months would have again reigned as far as the Vistula. A short respite would have placed him at the head of another powerful army; and a disastrous retreat would have melted away the Coalition, and have encouraged the malcontent courts of Bavaria and Wurtemberg to welcome back with open arms the conqueror who had once before made them great at Germany's expense, and might be expected to do so again. Lord Castlereagh saw the critical character of the emergency; and, to use M. Thiers' expression, "*se levant soudainement, et, agissant comme une sorte de Providence qui disposait de tout,*" at once took the responsibility upon himself. He had formed his estimate of Bernadotte's character, and was convinced that he would neither lose the English subsidy, nor the hope of adding the crown of Norway to that of Sweden, for the sake of a point of honour. Having formed his opinion, his immediate impulse was to act upon it without hesitation or reserve. He could not comprehend the hesitation of his colleagues, whose intellects were as sagacious as his own, but who dared not take the bold course which they knew to be the wisest. The event fully confirmed his judgment. Bülow's and Winzingerode's divisions

were joined to Blücher's; Soissons was taken; and Napoleon found that even his genius could not resist the force which was concentrated against him on the field of Laon.<sup>1</sup> Bernadotte meanwhile, after a little growling, put the affront into his pocket; and the consciousness that he had been found out, exercised a most salutary influence upon his subsequent behaviour.

During the negotiations at Vienna, which followed the fall of Napoleon, Europe was beholden to Lord Castlereagh for the same quick judgment of character, and the same happy boldness in trusting to it. From the moment that Alexander crossed the Vistula, he had conceived the project of repaying Russia for all the efforts she was making, and all the sufferings she had undergone, by annexing the whole of Poland to his empire. Prussia he proposed to indemnify by confiscating Saxony for her benefit; and Austria, he thought, might be left to make good her own losses on the side of Italy. Such a scheme was clearly incompatible with the security of Europe. Lord Castlereagh was not wholly engrossed by the dangers and the policy of the present. He saw that, in the future, the cloud of war was quite as likely to rise on the side of Russia as of France. He was utterly disinclined, therefore, to thrust Austria into her very jaws—Austria who was England's ancient and true ally, and bound to her by the only bond of union that endures, the absence of all clashing interests. But Alexander insisted. He wished to make it a preliminary to all negotiation. When the Congress assembled at Vienna, and the map of Europe lay

<sup>1</sup> [March 9, 1814. The Allies were more than twice as strong as Napoleon.]

upon the table, he laid his hand upon Poland, with the words, *C'est à moi!* He had 200,000 men in Poland, and the Allies might come and turn them out if they could. His throne, he added, would not be safe, if, after all his sacrifices, he came back to Russia empty handed. It was evident that his heart was set upon the acquisition, and that if he yielded at all it would only be to force. As one of his generals observed, "Avec 600,000 hommes on ne négocie pas beaucoup."<sup>1</sup> With Napoleon still at Elba, and Europe still bleeding from the wounds of twenty years of war, a more timid man than Lord Castlereagh might have hesitated before breaking up an alliance which had done such splendid deeds, and plunging upon the mere calculations of a farsighted policy into a fresh struggle almost as formidable as that which he had just concluded. But he seems to have been thoroughly impressed with the truth, that a willingness on good cause to go to war is the best possible security for peace. He had no desire to procure for his country that pacific reputation which she has earned in later times, and which has in ten years cost her a war with one first-rate Power and brought her to the brink of war with another. He did not hesitate to form a new coalition against the new enemy. By engagements which subsequently took the form of a more general treaty between England, France, and Austria, it was agreed that the demands of Russia and Prussia upon Saxony and Poland should be resisted, if necessary, by force; and the proportions in which the Allies were to contribute to the

<sup>1</sup> [Attributed to "One of the leading Russian Generals," in a despatch of Mr. Jackson, British Minister at Berlin, dated August 19, 1814.]

conduct of the new war were laid down. The Emperor of Russia received secret information of the preparations that were being made, and came to the conclusion that his finances were in too desperate a condition to risk the chances of another war.

It is not, however, by one or two isolated successes that Lord Castlereagh's foreign policy ought to be tried. It is best judged by its general results. During the war his aim was to overthrow Napoleon, and to reduce France within her ancient limits. After the war his aim was to uphold the balance of power, and so to secure lasting peace to Europe. When the direction of England's foreign policy passed from his hands, both objects had been attained. Not only was Napoleon overthrown, but for one generation at least the warlike passions Napoleon had evoked were stilled, and all the changes that Napoleon's genius had achieved were effaced. For forty years the peace of Europe flourished undisturbed by one single conflict between any of the five great Powers who adjusted their differences at Vienna. There have been revolutionary disturbances in sufficient abundance ; and order has been frequently restored by foreign intervention upon one side or the other. But as far as international relations are concerned, there has been no rupture in Europe important enough to have been dignified by historians with the name of war. Europe has not enjoyed so long a repose from the curse of war since the fall of the Roman empire. Such an achievement is an ample justification of the acts of the Congress of Vienna and of the minister who bore so large a part in shaping its decrees.

It is discouraging for future pacifiers to reflect that the treaties which have been so rich in the blessings of peace should have been the object of censure more unsparing and more pertinacious than has followed Lord North's most eventful blunders, or Napoleon's bloodiest excesses. But every adjustment between rival claimants must always leave dissatisfaction upon many sides, and probably upon all sides, if the adjustment be a fair one. Every pacification, moreover, must *ex vi termini* be distasteful to those to whom war brings pleasure or profit: every guarantee of social order must be odious to those who pine for importance, and who know that it is hard to win in quiet times. And the very solidity of the structure has aggravated the animosity of its assailants. If the censors of the treaties of Vienna have been unusually pertinacious, it is because the results which those treaties effected have been unusually enduring.

Undoubtedly the arrangements of Vienna were not absolute perfection; nor have they in all cases been proof even for the limited period of forty years against the destructive agencies that prey upon political organizations. All the failures that have taken place have arisen from one cause: the practice of foreign intervention in domestic quarrels. There is no practice which the experience of nations more uniformly condemns, and none which governments more consistently pursue. Domestic discord is bad enough; but the passions which provoke it burn themselves out at last; and the contending parties are eventually schooled by each other into the moderation which alone makes the coexistence of freedom and order possible. But if foreign intervention on either side be once threatened, much

## EVILS OF FOREIGN INTERVENTION 25

more if it be carried out, a venom is infused into the conflict which no reaction weakens, and no revenge exhausts. The lesson has been taught in recent times by abundant instances, and still seems to have been taught in vain. The history of the last seventy years is strewn with the wrecks of national prosperity which these well-meant interventions have caused. Often they ruin at once the party on whose behalf they are made; and even if they bring to it a seeming victory at first, they ruin it not less effectually in the end. Incurable impotence and decay is the almost certain punishment of civil triumphs won with foreign arms. The powerful monarchs who assembled at Pillnitz<sup>1</sup> did not find themselves equal to the task of dragooning the French nation into loyalty; but they succeeded in provoking that sanguinary outburst of revolutionary fury which laid Europe waste for twenty years, and whose force is not expended now. The "untoward event" at Navarino, by forcing an artificial and premature freedom upon Greece, has only resulted in the production of two "sick men" instead of one.<sup>2</sup> Damascus has recently furnished us with a commentary upon our wisdom and

<sup>1</sup> [In August, 1791, the Emperor of Austria and the King of Prussia issued from Pillnitz, where they were the guests of the Elector of Saxony, a declaration suggesting that the sovereigns of Europe should take measures to enable the King of France to establish his government on a monarchical basis.]

<sup>2</sup> [On October 20, 1827, Admiral Codrington, in command of British, French, and Russian squadrons, destroyed the Turkish fleet in the harbour of Navarino. This was described, in the King's speech of January 29, 1828, as an "untoward event." It was one of the chief causes which prevented the Turks from crushing the Greek rebellion, and so ultimately secured Greek independence. The condition of Greece in 1862 was even less encouraging than it has since become.]

liberality, in presenting Syria, at the cannon's mouth, with a form of government of European manufacture.<sup>1</sup> And Laybach—the only one of the interventions of this century which Lord Castlereagh lived to see and to condemn—is now bearing fruit before our eyes. There is no doubt that the sovereigns who assembled there were actuated in what they did by no lust of territory, but only by a genuine dread of the revolutionary spirit, whose power and whose terrors, they, whose lives had been passed in fighting against its excesses, might be pardoned for overrating. But whatever their intentions were, their acts have produced nothing but evil. They believed that they were only quelling a military revolt, masked, as the recent military despotisms had been, by a cloud of liberal professions. But in the resolutions to which they came they were really, though unwittingly, decreeing that Naples should languish under forty years of cruel tyranny, and then alone of all the states in Italy should be unable to escape but through the gates of a bloody civil war.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [In 1841 the Egyptian Pasha, who had taken Syria from the Turk, was turned out again by European intervention, partly in consequence of his misgovernment of the Lebanon. Upon the restoration of the Lebanon to Turkey, a new form of government devised by the Western Powers was given to it. It was alleged to be due to this intervention that disturbances arose between the Lebanon tribes, the Maronites and Druses. In 1860 the disturbances spread to Damascus, and the Turks restored order by massacring two thousand Christians.]

<sup>2</sup> [At the Congress of Troppau, held at the end of 1820, Austria, Russia, and Prussia laid it down that revolutionary attacks on monarchical government (such as had then recently occurred at Naples) were dangerous to the peace of Europe. In pursuance of this principle the three Powers agreed in the following year at Laybach that an Austrian army should re-establish the Bourbon

## FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS OPPOSED 27

Against this policy Lord Castlereagh, who only witnessed its beginnings, protested on every occasion on which it was attempted. At Aix-la-Chapelle<sup>1</sup> he successfully resisted the desire with which the Allies seem to have been possessed of meddling in the internal policy of France. At Troppau and Laybach he stoutly refused the concurrence of Great Britain, and refused even to be present, lest his presence should be construed into acquiescence. His refusal was all the more marked that the English Ambassador at Vienna had incautiously promised that he should be there; and Lord Castlereagh made it still more emphatic by absolutely declining an invitation to meet Metternich at Hanover, after the intervention in Naples had taken place. He carried out his objection to foreign interventions consistently to the end. Almost his last despatch was an earnest appeal personally addressed to the Emperor Alexander, entreating him to abstain from intervention on behalf of the Greeks, and labouring to dissipate the indignation which the murder of the Greek patriarch<sup>2</sup> by the Turks had naturally roused in his mind. He was on the point of starting for Verona to protest against the French intervention

King of Naples, which was done. The Bourbons were finally driven out by Garibaldi in 1860-61.]

<sup>1</sup> [It was due to the action of the British representatives, Wellington and Castlereagh, that the immediate evacuation of France by the Allied troops was agreed to at the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1818. Castlereagh also resisted any interference in French internal affairs.]

<sup>2</sup> [In April, 1821, a revolt broke out in the Morea, in the course of which the Greek insurrectionaries put to death every Turkish man, woman, or child, whom they could catch. The Sultan, by way of reprisal, hung the Greek Patriarch before his palace on Easter morning, April 22, 1821.]

in Spain,<sup>1</sup> when the aberration came upon him under which his life was cut short. If the alliances which he formed have been broken up, and the map of Europe has been a little changed since his time, these political protectorates have uniformly been the cause. The Crimean war, which has broken up the old system of alliances, was caused by the Russian protectorate in Turkey ; the Italian war, which has produced so many territorial changes, is due to the Austrian and French protectorates in Italy.<sup>2</sup> The disruption of the Netherlands, which frustrated one of Lord Castlereagh's most cherished plans, was brought about by the protectorate of Liberalism, which at that time Louis Philippe thought it prudent to assume. The natural consequence of that revolution was that Belgium should become a dependency of France. She has hitherto escaped that fate, thanks in great measure to the skilful guidance of the ablest of all European monarchs. But she has ceased to perform the function for which she was destined in the European system. She has become rather a prey to tempt France than an outpost to repel her.

But though it is evident that the breaches in the structure of Vienna have been made entirely by revolutions and their foreign friends or foes, the

<sup>1</sup> [He had drawn up instructions for his own guidance prescribing non-intervention in the affairs of Spain, then suffering from a revolution and from the revolt of her South American colonies.]

<sup>2</sup> [Modena, Parma, and Tuscany were virtually under the protectorate of Austria ; as Rome was under that of France. In 1859 Great Britain proposed the abandonment of these protectorates, and if that had been accepted, the war of liberation might at least have been postponed, if not averted.]

assailants of Lord Castlereagh's policy go a step further, and maintain that these revolutions have been owing to the vicious system adopted at Vienna, of parcelling out the populations of Europe like herds of cattle among the various royal litigants who claimed to own them. This was an accusation which produced a great effect at the time; and made, as it was, in ignorance of the negotiations by which these changes were effected, and the imperious necessity that exacted them, it was not wholly unreasonable. It is much more perplexing to comprehend how it can have been repeated by writers of our own day, who are acquainted with the difficulties under which the Congress undertook its labours. It is fair to remember (though it is often forgotten) that in dealing with these territorial arrangements the Congress was not acting with free hands. Its proceedings were only one stage in a great work, by the past of which it was already pledged, and to whose future permanence it was bound to look. It must be judged in connection with all the other acts of the great Alliance by which Napoleon was overthrown and Europe set free. That Alliance was called into existence to rescue Europe from the curse of a military tyranny. Whatever was necessary to effect this object, or to preserve Europe for the future from a like fate, it was the duty of the Alliance to carry out. But the Congress did not constitute the whole of their efforts for this end, it only crowned and perfected them. The Powers entered into it, pledged to arrangements to which they had consented in the hour of need, and to which they owed the combination of forces by which the first part of their great task had been achieved. They had, therefore,

not only future safeguards to provide, but past pledges to redeem. Lord Castlereagh, on the part of Great Britain, had assented to these agreements while the war was going on, and it was not open to him to recede from them when he had brought it to a prosperous issue by their help.

Most of the arrangements which have been found fault with, either then or since, were made in pursuance of these bargains into which he had entered for the purpose of swelling the forces of the Alliance. Bernadotte had been bought by the cession of Norway at the treaty of Abo, the provisions of which were accepted by Great Britain.<sup>1</sup> Austria demanded as the price of her adhesion the restoration of her empire to the proportions of 1805, which was accordingly guaranteed by the secret articles of the Treaty of Töplitz,<sup>2</sup> and afterwards more explicitly at Frankfort. But in 1805 Austria was in possession of Venetia: so that before the battle of Leipsic was fought, it was already guaranteed by promises which could not be broken that Austria should be an Italian Power. The same treaty secured to Prussia a restoration to the position which she held in the same year; and the territory assigned to her involved those encroachments upon Saxony which so deeply moved the sympathies of the English Opposition.<sup>3</sup> Some

<sup>1</sup> [By this treaty between Russia and Sweden, signed in 1812, Bernadotte was to contribute 35,000 men to the war, and in return was given Norway. We assented in March, 1813.]

<sup>2</sup> [Concluded September 9, 1813, between Russia, Prussia, and Austria. On November 12, 1813, an offer of peace was made to Napoleon by the Allies at Frankfort, which specifically included the terms mentioned.]

<sup>3</sup> [By the Treaty of Vienna a considerable section of the North-East of Saxony was given to Prussia.]

recent writers have blamed the Congress for halting in the work of mediatisation, and leaving Germany in the comminuted condition which is ever inviting the aggressions or the intrigues of her two powerful and compact neighbours. Whether the Congress would have judged it to be their function to throw Europe into the crucible and to cast her anew on a theoretic pattern, may well be doubted. But the treaties which the necessities of war had forced the Allies to conclude would have shut them out from such a policy, if they had wished to enter on it. As their armies advanced to the French frontier they were naturally more intent upon increasing their force than upon remodelling the map of Europe, and they admitted the minor States, who had formed the old Confederation of the Rhine, upon very easy terms.<sup>1</sup> To all these treaties England was a consenting party. Neither the promise which secured Norway to Bernadotte, nor that which reintroduced Austria into Italy, nor those which limited the remodelling of Germany, could be repudiated by her when their purpose had been served and the consideration for them had been enjoyed. So strongly did Lord Castlereagh recognize the obligations which had been contracted in the crisis of the war, that he extended them even to Murat. At the moment when an overwhelming force was the one thing needful, Metternich had bought Murat by promises of security.<sup>2</sup> Great Britain had upheld the claims of the Bourbon

<sup>1</sup> [By a series of treaties concluded at Frankfort, at the end of 1813, in the main restoring the pre-Napoleonic *status quo*.]

<sup>2</sup> [By treaty of January 11, 1814, recognizing Murat as King of Naples, and giving him a small extension of territory. Castle-reagh assented on the 22nd.]

dynasty up to that time; but Lord Castlereagh at once acknowledged as her own the obligation which her ally had undertaken, and restrained the British agents from any molestation of Murat. It was only when he began, in the language of the turf, "to hedge," and to provide by secret treachery against the possible contingency of Napoleon's success, that he was held to have forfeited the guarantee of the Allies.

These were the pledges the Congress had to redeem; but it had also safeguards to provide. The costly peace that had been won, was won in vain, if no security was taken against a return of the same calamities. The devastating flood had been forced back into its ancient bed at the cost of incredible sacrifices; and unless dykes were built to restrain its waters for the future, all these sacrifices would be required again. Therefore, Lord Castlereagh prevailed upon the Allies to guard the two points that were most exposed, by constructing the kingdom of the Netherlands and by strengthening the kingdom of Sardinia. The first was effected by combining Belgium and Holland; the second, by adding Genoa and some other districts to Piedmont. Of the wisdom of the second of these arrangements no question has been made in our day, bitterly as it was impugned by Mr. Brougham and others at the time. The first has undoubtedly failed. It may be questioned whether the kingdom of the Netherlands was ever strong enough for the work it was set to do; and there can be no doubt that the fragment, which was encouraged by France to break away, is both unequal and indisposed to the task. When once France has made up her mind to set Europe

at defiance, the occupation of Belgium will be a mere military promenade. But in justice to Lord Castlereagh it must be remembered that the scheme as he planned it was never carried out. A kind of interference, for which he had little looked, and which he had taken no precautions to avert, took the kernel out of it, and left nothing but the husk behind. He was foiled by the cunning of one woman and the feelings of another. His plan, as originally conceived, was that the Prince of Orange should become King of Holland and Belgium, and that the heir of the new monarchy should marry the heiress of the crown of England. Such a marriage would have knit the two countries together, very nearly as closely as, for a century, Hanover had been knit to England. It might fairly be expected that the English Government would exercise a considerable influence over the Government of the Netherlands; and that on the other hand, in the case of a war, she would have treated a violation of the Belgian frontier as a violation of her own. It would thus have been in effect, not weak Holland, but powerful England, that would have watched the hotly contested boundary which France has been for centuries struggling to overstep. Antwerp, so long the great object of English apprehensions—the possession of which by France would be, according to Napoleon's phrase, "a loaded pistol held to England's head"—Antwerp would thus have been in her own hands to protect. It is easy to see that, if this plan had taken effect, the course of events would have been very different. It may be safely assumed, that if English counsels could have commanded a hearing at the Hague, the unwise

policy which irritated the Belgians into revolt would never have been adopted. At all events, it would not have led to the same results. With England's Queen for their Queen, that revolution of priests and place-hunters would never have been hazarded. Still more confidently may it be assumed that a French army would not have interfered to save the "*braves Belges*" from a defeat, which was inevitable if they had been left to fight Holland by themselves.<sup>1</sup>

But the Emperor Alexander had views of his own with respect to the marriage of the Prince of Orange ; and he was prepared to dispute the prize. Unfortunately, the contest lay in an arena in which English diplomacy has always been unfortunate, and in which the Russians are notoriously expert. A Russian Princess was sent over to England, presented to the Prince Regent, and by him introduced without a thought of suspicion to the Princess Charlotte. The Princess was much struck with her new friend, and zealously cultivated her society. After a time, it was whispered that she was betraying a strange reluctance to the marriage with the Prince of Orange, upon which Lord Castlereagh was at the moment patiently building a scheme of European polity. The rumours proved too true. Ever since the Princess had been intimate with the Duchess of Oldenburg, she had, for some unexplained reason, expressed an unconquerable aversion for the Prince of Orange.

<sup>1</sup> [The Government of the Hague tried to make Belgium Dutch, and also interfered with the religious education in that country. The disruption of 1830 was due in part to these causes, and in part to the intrigues and assistance of the French Government.]

At last she secretly fled from her father's house rather than consent. After all the available artillery of advice, menace, remonstrance, and objurgation had played upon her in vain, the Court were obliged to accept her decision that the marriage was not to be. Lord Castlereagh would probably have blessed her in his heart, if she had announced that decision earlier. For by the time that it had been formed he had already pledged himself to all the leading arrangements of the political edifice of which this marriage was to be the foundation. The consent of Austria and the nominal acquiescence of the other two great Powers had been obtained, and the King of Holland had already long ago been informed of the widened diadem which the Powers in general and England in particular destined him to wear. It was too late, therefore, to recede. All that could be done was to make the best use of the materials that remained for constructing a north-eastern barrier against France. The kingdom of the Netherlands was set up with as good a frontier as could be extorted from the necessities of the Bourbons, who would gladly have retained Antwerp if they could; Prussia was brought up to support it on the left flank; it was provided with a free constitution and plenty of good advice from the British envoy; and the island of Java was ceded back to it by England to furnish a nucleus for the revival, if it might be, of that trade which of old had made a district of reclaimed sand-banks into a dreaded European Power. But the combination had in reality broken down with the abandonment of the marriage; and all such expedients for giving it the semblance of efficiency

were vain. The times were past when the intrepidity of the United Provinces could outweigh the resources of France. The new kingdom endured only till it felt the first gust of the returning Revolutionary storm; and then the ill-cemented fabric came in two. Lord Castlereagh can hardly be held to blame because a combination of such peculiar difficulty was wrecked in his absence, upon shoals whose existence it is not in the nature of an English statesman to suspect. He was never a *boudoir* diplomatist. The species does not readily grow in England, and seems only to be generated freely in the atmosphere of a despotic Court. Probably the art of leading the House of Commons and the art of beguiling illustrious ladies are gifts which cannot coexist in the same mind. In extenuation, or justification, of Lord Castlereagh's failure it can only be said, that the object which he had in view—the creation of a kingdom capable of resisting France upon soil which had formed a dependency of distant Powers for centuries—was evidently difficult to attain; and that the plan which he conceived, of uniting its fortunes for a time with those of England, was the only possible escape from the difficulties of the problem. If he failed to carry out his scheme in its integrity, it was only because he displayed the common deficiency and suffered the common defeat of English politicians. From the days when Cardinal Wolsey was unable to counterminate Anne Boleyn, to the days when Lord Palmerston was outwitted upon the Spanish marriages, English statesmen have always failed in backstairs contests with female politicians.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [In 1846 a complicated tripartite negotiation between England, France, and the Queen Regent of Spain as to the marriage of her

The territorial arrangements of the Congress were in all cases therefore dictated by necessity—by the necessity of keeping promises made during the war in the first class of cases, and by the necessity of averting another war in the second. It is equally clear that there was no claim of justice to bar compliance with that necessity. Of all so-called “rights of conquest,” this at least is indefeasible, so to dispose of your conquests as to avert the necessity for conquering again. All the countries parcelled out by the Congress were conquered countries. They had formed part of Napoleon’s empire or swelled the list of his tributary states. Willingly or unwillingly, they had furnished troops to aid in the sanguinary enterprise of desolating the world. The smallest expiation that could be exacted of them was that they should bear, in part at least, the cost of crushing the military tyranny they had helped to form. They had no right to complain if it was in loss of territory, instead of money contribution, that they paid the penalty of their complicity, or defrayed the expense of neutralizing its effects. They were not in a position to claim that their national sentiments should be preferred to the enfranchisement of Europe and their own, for that was the alternative. Take the case of Venetia, whose wrongs have pointed many an eloquent philippic. Suppose Lord Castlereagh to have been smitten with the idea of Italian independence, or to have been convinced of the imprescriptible title of the Venetian

two daughters, the Queen of Spain and her sister, resulted in their marriage to the candidates favoured by France. Louis Philippe and Guizot were very generally thought to have shown a want of good faith in the matter.]

oligarchy who had scarcely been strong enough to strike one blow in their own defence—suppose that in the spring of 1813, just when Austria was balancing between her fears of the conqueror of Austerlitz and Wagram, and her hopes of recovering her position as a first-rate power by joining the Coalition against him—suppose that just then

- he had announced that Great Britain never could consent to sanction such a treason against the peoples as the erection of a German Government on an Italian soil, and that he had induced Russia and Prussia to hold the same language—would Venetia have profited by his regard for her nationality? Austria would have lost all motive
- for joining the Coalition, and would have carried her services to a market where they were better valued. The Coalition would have been easily crushed; England's last hope of successful resistance would have been trampled out; Europe would have continued to groan under her oppressor; and the only advantage secured would have been, that Venice would have worn French instead of German chains. Europe would have lost everything, and Venice would have gained nothing. Lord Castlereagh would have disdained to reply to a counsellor who should have suggested to him such diplomacy as this; and yet this is the policy which those who blame Lord Castlereagh for acceding to the Austrian reoccupation of Venice, in effect desire him to have pursued.

Many writers, however, both of that day and of more recent times, have attempted to elude the obvious force of these considerations, by claiming for peoples an immunity from the result of the crimes of their governments; and setting up on

their behalf an inalienable right to be included in their own particular nationality, which no offence can forfeit, and no political expediency circumscribe. Advocates of French, German, Italian, and Polish nationalities respectively are never weary of repeating this theory, in every variety of enunciation of which an elastic doctrine is capable. We do not profess to have any reply to this claim. An answer is only possible where there is some common ground to start from, some principle equally acknowledged on both sides to refer to. The modern theory of nationality is safe from refutation. The blows of argument fall harmlessly upon its unsubstantial forms. Controversy is waste labour in a domain of thought where no term is defined, no principle laid down, and no question propounded for investigation. It is very possible, therefore, that Lord Castlereagh helped to commit any number of "violations of the principle of nationality :" and if we are challenged to disprove the charge, we must retreat from the ordeal in despair. The only consideration that we should venture to plead in arrest of judgment is the remarkable variety, perhaps we should say antithesis, of the charges that have been preferred under this count at different times against the Congress of Vienna. The clamour on behalf of violated nationalities is the same now as it was when the Congress had just closed its labours ; but though the accusation is as strongly worded as ever, the nature of the charge is exactly the reverse of what it was. The censors of 1860 accuse the Congress of Vienna of having omitted to do precisely that which the censors of 1815 charged it with having done. Then the cry was that the Congress

had treated ancient limits with contempt ; now the cry is that it regarded them too much. It went too far for contemporary Liberals ; it has not gone far enough for the Liberals of our own day. It made slow and hesitating steps towards the *arrondissement* of empires, the construction of united nationalities, and the extinction of fragmentary states. Its measures were blamed as violent then ; they are condemned as petty and partial now. Then it was denounced for enlarging Bavaria and Prussia at the expense of petty states, and for suppressing the ancient republic of Genoa by annexing it to Piedmont ; now it is despised for not having risen to the grandeur of the conception of a United Germany and a United Italy. The sorrows of Norway and the wrongs of Denmark, which Lord Grey was wont to dwell upon with frantic pathos, are absolutely forgotten now ; but in their place we hear suggestions from Liberal authorities, quite in the spirit of Lord Castlereagh's policy, that it might be desirable to submit Denmark to the same fate as Norway, and so to oppose a United Scandinavia to the westward march of Russia.

In truth, it was very easy for Mr. Brougham to launch vigorous invectives at Lord Castlereagh, for "considering Courts, not Peoples," in his negotiations ; but if Mr. Brougham had himself been installed in Vienna with despotic power over all Europe, he would have been compelled to hurl the same censures at himself. It was impossible for any statesman to consult the wishes of the peoples, for the simple reason that the peoples had no enduring and settled wishes to consult. The comparison between the national grievances of that time and the facts as they exist now, is a commentary

on the durability of national sentiments which cannot be too attentively studied. With the solitary exception of Poland, there is not a single grievance of that date which was endowed with sufficient vitality to last for the space of a generation. Norway was the first victim that moved the pity of the Opposition of that day. The forcible union of the Swedish and Norwegian crowns was denounced as "the most profligate measure of modern times." To judge by the language that was used, one might have thought that a new partition of Poland was in contemplation, that Norwegian independence would be vindicated by some new Kosciusko, and that pauper Norwegian nobles would be met with for the next half-century begging for alms or courting heiresses in every capital in Europe. No one could have doubted from the tone of their advocates that the Norwegians were unalterably attached to the Danish connection. But if the Congress of Vienna had acted on any such assumption, they would have been grievously mistaken. The transference was effected with scarcely a struggle, and since the day that it was completed the Norwegians have been as contented and prosperous a people as any on the Continent. The next subjects of commiseration were Genoa and Ragusa. Both had been independent republics, and both under the new arrangements were incorporated into the dominions of neighbouring potentates. Genoa really had some cause of complaint. Lord William Bentinck,<sup>1</sup> whose vigorous sense and high ability were occasionally marred

<sup>1</sup> [1774-1839. He commanded a successful expedition in 1814, whereby Genoa was captured, and he there issued the proclamation referred to. He became the first Governor-General of India in 1833.]

by a tendency to sentimental politics, had been imprudent enough to promise the Genoese that their ancient form of government should be revived. He acted in entire opposition to his orders, which he either misconstrued or despised. Lord Castlereagh had no inclination to revive these petty sovereignties in the neighbourhood of France. Experience had proved that they were dead relics of a bygone state of things, and that in the existing condition of military science they were incapable of self-defence, and only a temptation to aggressive neighbours. The subsequent fate of Cracow<sup>1</sup> has justified the conclusions which he formed. But the Genoese did not take this view of the matter. They hated the Piedmontese with all the hatred that national neighbourhood seems peculiarly calculated to inspire. Moreover, there were motives of a less ignoble cast to prejudice them against the change. Genoa had a splendid history to look back upon, and its inhabitants were naturally unwilling that theirs should be the generation that should bring that history to a close. For themselves influential citizens could not look without dismay upon the destruction of all municipal ambitions which would be dealt by the conversion of Genoa into a mere seaport of Turin. All these feelings combined to make the Genoese passionately anxious to recover their lost independence. They sent in a vehement protest to the Congress of Vienna, and even went so far as formally to entrust their papers to Mr. Whitbread, that he might fight

<sup>1</sup> [Cracow and the adjoining territory were, by the Treaty of Vienna, formed into a free state. In consequence of an insurrection in 1846, the state was extinguished at a conference of Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and its territory absorbed by Austria.]

## SAXONY AND RHENISH PRUSSIA 43

their battle in the House of Commons: Here, if anywhere, one would have thought, was a strong national sentiment which would make Genoa a thorn in the side of Piedmont so long as the ill-assorted union should continue. But all this wrath and fury has passed away like a summer shower. Lord Castlereagh was firm, and the annexation was carried through. The union has increased the prosperity of the Genoese to a point which, if they had remained independent, they never could have reached : and, by giving strength to Piedmont, it has laid the foundation on which the genius of Cavour has been able to build a glorious structure. Prussian Saxony and Rhenish Prussia are cases of the same kind. In disposing of them, their ancient state was absolutely disregarded. They were both applied, without the slightest reference to their former sovereigns, to the object of strengthening Prussia by the addition of provinces nationally allied and geographically important. In the execution of this transfer the right of conquest alone was relied upon, and no account was taken of the wishes of the populations. To them the change at the time was profoundly distasteful. In Saxony the influential portion of the community were keenly sensitive to the loss of importance which a small state suffers when it is merged into a greater ; and in the new Rhenish acquisitions the people had in addition to regret the loss of many undoubted improvements which the French had introduced. A long time passed away before the discontent was pacified and the new populations became Prussian in heart. In 1820 Mr. Lamb<sup>1</sup> writes to

<sup>1</sup> [1782-1853. He was, at the time referred to, Minister at the Court of Bavaria. He was made Lord Beauvale in 1839,

his Government that, owing to the misgovernment of Berlin, their feelings were as hostile as ever. Even in 1838, when the affair of the Archbishop of Cologne<sup>1</sup> was pending, Varnhagen<sup>2</sup> doubted whether the precedent of Belgium would not be followed on the Rhine, and the Prussian connection be violently shaken off. But in course of years, habit and mild government have done their work. The grievances of the new Prussian provinces have gone the way of the grievances of Genoa and Norway. They pointed many an eloquent outburst in their time, and now that they have played their part they are consigned to the limbo where forgotten party cries repose.

It is clear, therefore, that if Lord Castlereagh and his colleagues at Vienna had taken the advice of their contemporary critics, they would not have consulted the ultimate wishes of the populations with whom they were dealing. They would have abandoned great political objects for the sake of deferring to a national sentiment, which in spite of its seeming earnestness was only a passing whim. Whatever they had done, they could not have produced greater contentment in these various countries than that which prevails at present; but, if they had done as they were bidden by their

and in 1848 succeeded his brother, the statesman, as Viscount Melbourne.]

<sup>1</sup> [In consequence of disputes between the Archbishop and the Prussian Government, the Archbishop was arrested on November 20, 1837. Disturbances thereupon broke out in Rhenish Prussia, and continued through the year 1838. Feeling was as much hostile to Prussia as it was in favour of the Archbishop.]

<sup>2</sup> [Varnhagen d'Ense, a German publicist, born 1785, died 1858. In his early life he was a patriot, and as such fought in the Napoleonic wars. He was one of the Liberals of 1848.]

opponents at the time, they would have produced it at the gratuitous cost of sacrificing the strategic advantages which, as matters stand, they have secured. As against the accusers who lived at the same time and enjoyed the same means of judging as themselves, their historical justification has been complete. On the other hand, unless they had possessed the gift of prophecy, it would have been impossible for them to have anticipated the charges of more recent critics. Upon the points where their structure ultimately gave way, not a symptom of weakness was then to be seen. There was not a cloud to indicate danger in those quarters of the horizon from which the storm that should try it so severely was to arise. Hungarian insurrections, Turkish wars, Italian revolutions, were causes of disturbance which it never at that time occurred to statesmen to guard against or patriots to predict. The Turks were not even mentioned at the Congress of Vienna. The ambition of Russia to push her frontier westward very nearly broke up the Congress in confusion; and her preparations for extending it towards India were sufficiently active to cause considerable apprehension to English diplomatists. But in 1815 the decay of Turkey did not seem imminent; and no one could have guessed that from her weakness could have proceeded the first fatal blow against the European system which the Congress were building up. The loyalty of Hungary was so unimpeachable that the Hungarian regiments were noted by English envoys as the most anti-democratic in the Austrian army. Even in Italy, at the time the Congress was sitting, there was no trace of the discontent which a few years afterwards became so menacing. The idea of Italian

unity might have germinated in a few poetical minds; but it would have been passed by as a student's dream if there had been no misgovernment to warm it into life. The wishes of the various populations were bent on objects little reconcilable with the idea of Italian unity. Genoa, as we have seen, longed only for an independent existence of its own. Mr. Cooke,<sup>1</sup> a gentleman of great experience and sagacity, who was himself of opinion that "an ecclesiastico-civil potentate is a monster," reported, nevertheless, to Lord Castlereagh in 1815, that, "the Romans in general were attached to the ecclesiastical government;" and that "Murat's proclamations for the independence of Italy, and his invitations to the Italians to enlist under his banners, were treated hitherto with ridicule." In the same year the Foreign Secretary is informed by another of his correspondents that "the Tuscans are much attached to their sovereign the Archduke." Sicily notoriously dreaded nothing so much as an administrative union with Naples. Milan was infested by secret societies, but the mass of the people forced the Senate to declare against the Viceroy, who was keeping out the Austrians; and Lombardy, as a whole, only petitioned for the modest favour of being governed by a resident Archduke instead of direct from Vienna. Nor was there any ground for believing that the rule of Austria would be oppressive. Her system of government before the revolutionary war had been so successful, that those who had lived under it looked back to it with genuine affection, and longed to

<sup>1</sup> [1755-1820. He accompanied Lord Castlereagh to Vienna as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. At the time referred to in the text he was on a special mission to the Roman Court.]

resume their allegiance. The devoted efforts which the Tyrolese<sup>1</sup> made to exchange the government of Munich for that of Vienna form one of the most striking chapters of the revolutionary war. Lord Burghersh,<sup>2</sup> in his report to Lord Castlereagh, gives a very emphatic testimony to the existence of a similar feeling of intense devotion among the population of Breisgau—what is now the southern part of Baden—towards their ancient master. And in Belgium the feeling was so strong, that it was with great difficulty that the people were induced to renounce the hope that Austria would again undertake to govern them. They had no desire to be united to any of their neighbours. They hated the French, abominated the Prussians, and had no great admiration for the Dutch. All that they desired was to return under the shadow of that sceptre which our generation has been accustomed to regard as the embodiment of all that is feeble, and incompetent, and tyrannical. It is too true that a change soon came over this affectionate relation between the Crown of Austria and its subjects. The Viennese Government had learnt the art of harsh and oppressive administration from its revolutionary conquerors, and as soon as the peace gave it leisure it put the lesson into practice. Scarcely was the House of Hapsburg re-established in its former grandeur than it entered upon that

<sup>1</sup> [By the Treaty of Pressburg (1805), the Tyrol was transferred from Austria to Bavaria. At Austrian instigation in 1809 the whole Tyrol rose and maintained an unequal contest under Hofer with France and Bavaria till January, 1810, when Hofer was treacherously captured.]

<sup>2</sup> [A soldier, diplomatist, Member of Parliament, musician, and author. From 1813 to the capture of Paris he was military commissioner at the head-quarters of the Allies.]

steady career of misgovernment which it has pursued with so much perseverance up to the present day. The Austrian name became odious in Italy and the Tyrol within a very few years of the peace of 1815 ; and now, after many years of vain conflict with disaffection, the dynasty has so completely forfeited its ancient character, that probably a large majority of its subjects would hail its overthrow with joy.

It is absurd, therefore, to speak as if the events

- of the last two or three years were a condemnation of the policy supported by Lord Castlereagh at Vienna. As the facts lay then before his eyes, there was not the slightest probability that the arrangements the Congress were making in Italy would ever disturb the peace of Europe. There was no general discontent with the ancient dynasties, and nothing in the traditional character of Austrian government to create that discontent where it had not existed before. Least of all was it probable
- that any movement in Italy would take the direction of Italian unity. The common tendency of mankind is not towards union, but secession. The promptings of neighbourly jealousy find a much readier ear than the dull suggestions of statesman-like policy, and in Italy these jealousies have always raged with peculiar violence. Lord Castlereagh would have been mad if he had acted on the supposition that the union of all Italian States into a single nation would ever become the object of Italian aspirations. The creation of a United Italy, had it been possible, would have been in the genius of Lord Castlereagh's policy. He would have valued it, as we value it now, for the strength it would have afforded to the European equilibrium, and the bulwark it would have opposed to France.

It effects the very object for which he laboured to build up the kingdoms of Sardinia and the Netherlands, and for which, under the inspiration of Mr. Pitt,<sup>1</sup> he invited Prussia to the left bank of the Rhine. But even if he had had the power, he was too wise to have attempted to manufacture empires on such a scale. He knew that to compress into an artificial unity the various races of the Italian peninsula, who had not then learned to wish for it, nor unlearned their ancient feuds, was beyond the power of a European guarantee.

The true nature of the policy which guided Lord Castlereagh during his whole career has been singularly misconceived, not only by his antagonists, but by his friends. The character of his mind was so different from that of most of the statesmen amongst whom he lived, or by whom he has been succeeded, that he could hardly fail to be misjudged. He was that rare phenomenon—a practical man of the highest order, who yet did not by that fact forfeit his title to be considered a man of genius. In men of genius, as a rule, the imagination or the passions are too strongly developed to suffer them to reach the highest standard of practical statesmanship. They follow some poetical ideal, they are under the spell of some fascinating chapter of past history, they are the slaves of some talismanic phrase which their generation has taken up, or they have made to themselves a system to which all men and all circumstances must be bent.

<sup>1</sup> [“I am always led to revert with considerable favour to a policy which Mr. Pitt, in the year 1806, had strongly at heart, which was to tempt Prussia to put herself forward on the left bank of the Rhine, more in military contact with France.”—*Castlereagh to Wellington*: “Correspondence,” vol. x. p. 144.]

Something there almost always is that beguiles them away from the plain, prosaic, business-like view of the concerns of this prosaic world. Consequently the mass of mankind, who have a dull but surefooted instinct of their own interest, feel an uncomfortable misgiving when they see a genius at the head of their affairs. They are aware that first-rate brilliancy cannot be had without something of distortion; but it is no consolation to them that the illusions which are luring him on to ruin lend in the mean time an exquisite charm to the eloquence by which he induces them to accompany him on the road. On the other hand, the clever world is very intolerant of plain, practical statesmen. It maintains, sometimes with very good reason, that where the imagination is stunted, it is merely because the whole mind is stunted too; and that the claim to practical common sense is often only a euphemism for a narrow intelligence straitened by an abject regard for precedents and for routine. As a rule, both sides are right in the suspicions they entertain. It is rare to meet with a fervid imagination which is drilled to reserve its flights for efforts of oratory, and to give place entirely to more sober faculties in council. It is still rarer to see an absolutely unimaginative mind possessed of the energy and of the breadth of view indispensable in the statesman of a troubled period. Both kinds of excellence produce great and successful rulers, where they occur; and both are apt to meet, in those around them, with incredulity that such combinations of opposite qualities can exist. Lord Castlereagh was a good instance of the second kind. His mind was energetic and original, without suffering in the slightest degree from any bias of

## CONTEMPORARY MISCONCEPTIONS 51

sentiment. He commanded a far broader view than most statesmen of his time; and he contemplated it through a mental atmosphere untinted by the faintest imaginative hue.

This intellectual composition was of great service to him at many a council-board in Europe, and conferred great benefits on those over whose interests he watched. But it caused him to be constantly misunderstood, both by his contemporaries and by posterity. The clever men of the day could not be brought to believe that a mind so powerful, so clear-sighted, so resourceful, dwelt in a passionless, colourless atmosphere, in which their own talents would have been frozen up. They could not conceive that one man could combine Canning's eagle glance and intellectual grasp, with a languor of emotion and a freedom from enthusiasm that Mr. George Rose<sup>1</sup> himself might have envied. At first they were inclined to explain away the phenomenon by assuming his oratory to be the measure of his mind, and denying him the ability which his speeches were undoubtedly calculated to conceal. The events of 1813-1815 set this theory at rest. Foiled in this direction, his critics betook themselves to the remaining alternative for an explanation. Under his passionless exterior they pretended to detect a deadly zeal against the liberties of mankind. They believed his foreign policy to be actuated by no other aim but to crush the freedom which he was reluctantly compelled to tolerate at home. And in this hateful crusade the

<sup>1</sup> [1744-1818. A subordinate member of the Government from 1782 onwards. It was said of him that "if cold he was correct; if monotonous, deep; and if sometimes prolix, he was generally clear."]

Holy Alliance, of whom he always spoke in Parliament with such respect, were in reality his sworn comrades and ready instruments. This view of his policy extended itself from his opponents to his friends. They, of course, did not give it such bad names; but they were not less wide of the mark in the tendency they assigned to it. They extolled him as the champion of legitimacy, the bulwark of monarchy, the incarnation of that resistance to revolutionary principles which had become a religious faith among the majority of the educated classes of that day. But whether people blamed it, or whether they admired it, there was a pretty general agreement that resistance to popular claims was a final cause of his political existence.

So far as this view of his policy on the one side or the other implied that he was animated by any hostility to freedom, it was undoubtedly unjust. But it was not unjust in the sense of being an exaggeration. It was an entire misconception of the character, and, so to speak, of the temperature of the man's mind. It was pitched on a key-note far too emotional. It assumed, what in those stirring times was true of most people, an enthusiastic nature; whereas enthusiasm was precisely the ingredient which had been omitted in the composition of Lord Castlereagh's character. All the other spurs to action he possessed—ambition, sense of honour, sense of duty, and the dogged attachment to an object once taken up, which is the special characteristic of our race. But no tinge of that enthusiastic temper which leads men to overhunt a beaten enemy, to drive a good cause to excess, to swear allegiance to a formula, or to pursue an impracticable ideal, ever threw its shadow upon Lord

Castlereagh's serene, impassive intelligence. He had his own notions of what good there was to be done, and what was the best way of doing it; and neither contradiction at home nor coaxing abroad ever moved him a hair's breadth from his own particular point of view. But they were such unpoetical, unromantic notions, that no one could, by any stretch of language, dignify them as "a cause." There were plenty of "causes" about the world at the time, concerning which associations agitated, and young men raved, and poets published spirit-stirring stanzas. But, except as they might influence votes in the House of Commons, these exciting movements did not affect Lord Castlereagh. Some of them he thought pernicious, others impracticable, and of others he thought the benefit, though real, enormously exaggerated; and he never would pretend a sympathy he did not feel. It was this impassibility which worked so badly for his fame. It was an affront and an offence to the literary class, by whom these enthusiasms were chiefly fed, and who on secondary points and for a certain space of time have the power of moulding public opinion at their will. He might have maintained his policy with impunity, if in his speeches he would have done readier homage to the Liberal catch-words of the day. If he had only constructed a few brilliant periods about nationality or freedom, or given a little wordy sympathy to Greece, or Naples, or Spain, or the South American republics, the world would have heard much less of the horrors of his policy.

But in respect to most of these questions he was a perfect heretic. Whether he approved of the doctrine of nationality or not, it is difficult to

say, for he never seems to have realized its existence. It had not made great way in the world before his death, and was principally confined to the Carbonari in Italy and the Illuminati in Germany.<sup>1</sup> The idea therefore scarcely seems to have dawned upon him that any one had laid it down as a political dogma, that no two peoples speaking different languages ought to be under the same government; and that any amount of revolutionary confusion was preferable to such an enormity. Not having mastered it, he was unable to draw from it its obvious inference, that Austria in holding Venetia, Denmark in holding Schleswig, and Prussia in holding Poland, were committing an unpardonable crime against the peoples. If he had been more instructed in what has been recently called the new European law, he might have been embarrassed at being asked to proffer to it the sanction of England, who owns, without any consent of the peoples whatever, more nationalities than she can comfortably count. There is no doubt that to the philological law of nations he was obstinately deaf, whether he perfectly understood it or no; and that if he had understood it better, he would have disliked it more. The poetical or literary law of nations met with quite as little favour at his hands. By his conduct in the Greek question he evidently did not assent to the

<sup>1</sup> [The Carbonari came into existence about 1808 in the kingdom of Naples. At first anti-Napoleonic, they later became anti-Bourbon, and spreading over Italy, were the champions of the nationalist cause. The Illuminati were a German semi-political, semi-religious, secret society of advanced views. The society itself perished about 1785; but it was succeeded by similar organizations which, under the Napoleonic tyranny, became identified with the cause of German nationality.]

modern theory, that the territorial limits of a country ought to be settled according to its literary history. He never understood why the fact that Æschylus had written in Attica, and Pindar had celebrated the Games of the Morea, some five and twenty centuries ago, furnished in itself any reason for changing the government under which Attica and the Morea happened at that moment to be. Possibly he would have been equally impenetrable to the argument, that because Dante was a citizen of Florence, or Virgil composed poetry in Rome, therefore a German ought not to reign in Venice. It never would have occurred to him as a possible theory, that governments should be overturned or treaties broken for the sake of giving a present reality to the traditional glory of some distant past. Some of the grounds of the Italian war he would have appreciated. If we may judge from the protests and warnings that he uttered when the Congress of Troppau were holding their disastrous deliberations, we may be sure that he would have resisted in 1859 the illegal suzerainty which Austria had acquired over the Italian Courts as earnestly as he guarded himself against acquiescing in it in 1820. He would have recognized all the evils of the misgovernment, the tendencies to which showed itself in the Neapolitan Bourbons even in his time, and which he constantly reprobated. But in regard to the question of nationality he would have been more unpopular in our day than even in his own. He was not of those who would have raised an insurrection, or gone to war "for an idea."

The same positive, practical good sense showed itself in relation to the question of popular rights. It was a mere calumny to call him an enemy to

freedom. In its truest and most literal sense—the exemption from oppression—he did more for it than any statesman of his age. We have the testimony of the Duke of Wellington, that he had done more to destroy the slave-trade than any man in Europe; and the struggle which absorbed the best years of his life was a struggle on a vast scale for the liberties of mankind. The Liberals of the day—and the anomaly has extended itself in some degree to our day also—chose to conceive a sentimental tenderness for Napoleon, because he tyrannized by the right of his own sword, instead of by the right of any hereditary claim. But his tyranny was not the less one of the severest and most searching the world has ever seen. The minute exactness with which his war contributions and war conscriptions were levied, invested him with a power of inflicting widespread misery which no Roman Emperor ever possessed. Other tyrannies have mainly affected narrow metropolitan areas, or have shown themselves in capricious but occasional acts of cruelty. But from Napoleon's tyranny time gave no respite, and insignificance no escape. His exactions ground down every income, and his massacres, thinly disguised under military names, thinned every village, from Reggio to Lübeck. To have borne a large part in freeing Europe from such a scourge as this—to have provided securities that made it for the future an impossibility—was to have done a greater service to the cause of freedom than any shifting of the equilibrium of electoral power is ever likely to effect.

But he was not blind to the value of representative institutions in securing freedom from internal

injury, though he valued the kernel a great deal more than the husk which protects it. In England he showed no sort of favour for that kind of freedom which is conferred by universal suffrage, and which is flourishing in such fascinating beauty in the State of Maryland<sup>1</sup> just now; nor was he ever guilty of the hypocrisy of encouraging abroad that which he repelled at home. But, on the other hand, he had no sympathy with absolutism. The extravagant theories of legitimacy entertained by some of the more violent spirits of his time received no countenance from him. While many around him, both Englishmen and foreigners, were anxious to give to the war of 1813-1814 the character of a crusade in behalf of legitimacy against revolution, he absolutely refused to lend to it such a colour. To his mind the triumph of any particular form of government would have been a poor compensation for assenting to the pernicious doctrine, that foreigners have a right to choose for a nation what its form of government shall be. He refused even to see the Bourbons while there was a chance of peace with Napoleon. The following letter to Lord Liverpool shows how much he dreaded lest the war for European independence should be mistaken for a counter-revolutionary crusade—

“Upon the whole my impressions are against any step which should, even in appearance, mix our system with that of the Bourbons, whilst we are embarked in discussions for peace, and ignorant how our Allies would relish such a step at the present moment; and in this view I doubt the

<sup>1</sup> [Maryland was at this time part of the theatre of the American Civil War. It was thought to be wavering in its allegiance to the United States, and was kept in subjection by Federal troops.]

prudence even of a declaration as to the armistice by sea and land : first, because it would be considered an invitation to a rising ; and secondly, because I doubt its efficacy even to that object ; as those who reason at all cannot doubt that, were the Bourbons restored, hostilities would immediately cease. We ought always to recollect that we are suspected of having *une arrière-pensée* on the question of peace, and that we should act with the more caution.

"I have written very hastily my first impressions on your letter. They are intended for Bathurst, for whom I have a letter, as well as for yourself. From the early part of Lord Wellington's letter I think his impressions are the same as my own ; that, with all the objections to such a peace, if Bonaparte will give you your own terms, you ought not to risk yourselves and the Confederacy in the labyrinth of counter-revolution. If he will not, you may then run greater risks ; but even then I should wish to see more evident proofs of active disposition to throw off B.'s yoke, before I encouraged an effort."—(*Castlereagh Papers*, vol. i. series iii. p. 124.)

But though he was fortunate enough to obtain the high sanction of the Duke of Wellington for his policy, it was almost the only assistance he received. His attitude was maintained against the pressure of many of his Allies, against the wishes of his colleagues at home, and against the secret interference of the Prince Regent himself. Almost the only angry shade that passes over the calm, imperturbable style of his correspondence during this exciting period, was drawn from him by the intelligence that the Prince Regent had secretly given to Count Lieven a pledge<sup>1</sup> in favour of the

<sup>1</sup> [Given in January, 1814, at the time the Congress of Châtillon was sitting.]

Bourbons at the moment when Lord Castlereagh was still negotiating with Napoleon. When the war did at last, through the obstinacy of the Emperor, result in the return of the Bourbons, he had no desire to inflict another despotism on France. It was by his advice that Louis XVIII. abstained from all "discussions on political metaphysics," and accepted the Charter simply. In the years of political confusion which followed in France, while the nation was beginning to work its new institutions, Lord Castlereagh's counsels were always on the side of strictly constitutional measures. He urged the King to avoid the "high-flying Royalists," to try and form, out of the men whom the Revolution had bred, a party strong enough to govern the country, and to give up the anomaly of an armed force maintained under any other authority than that of the King's responsible advisers. He gave, though to little purpose, advice of the same character in Spain. He entreated the King not to return to the ancient state of things:—

"If His Majesty announces to the nation his determination to give effect to the main principles of a Constitutional *régime*, I think it is probable that he may extinguish the existing arrangement with impunity, and re-establish one more consistent with the efficiency of the executive power, and which may restore the great landed proprietors and the clergy a due share of authority; but to succeed in establishing a permanent system he must speak to the nation, and not give it the character of a military revolution, in doing which the language of Louis XVIII. may afford him some useful hints."

It would have been difficult to give advice

savouring less of any extreme political view, or more consonant with the spirit of the institutions which our own country enjoys. It is curious that the only point in respect of which Lord Castlereagh thought it necessary to go into detail, was the provision of the revolutionary Cortes, copied from America, under which the Ministers of the Crown were banished from the Legislature. He expressed a hope that this "inconceivable absurdity" would not be repeated, and attributed to it the failure of most of the mushroom constitutions that had grown up since the Revolution. Our generation, that has seen the operation of the same system in America, can appreciate the sagacity which attached such vital importance to a question apparently of detail. He took a similar course with respect to Sicily. He refused to infringe his favourite principle of non-intervention by forcing the King, under terror of British arms, to uphold the Sicilian Constitution. But he earnestly recommended its maintenance, and was ready to carry his efforts in its behalf to any extent short of actual war. He even proposed—as England had acquired in this particular case a right to express her opinion—to mark her displeasure at the King's illiberal intentions by breaking off diplomatic relations. But his cautious and sober mind shrank from hurrying his policy to the lengths to which theoretic politicians were prepared to go. Representative institutions were very well in Sicily and Spain, which had not been demoralized by Napoleonic despotism. They might be introduced without alarm in phlegmatic Holland. Though they were a venture full of danger, they must be regarded as the least of many dangerous alternatives in France. But Lord Castlereagh was

not prepared to extend the same experiment, without any preparation, to the fickle and inflammable populations of the South. When the proposal was made to him to encourage a demand for representative government in Italy, where the thing was absolutely unknown, and where the Jacobin leaven was still fermenting, he drew back. He thought, and events have fully justified his sagacity, that Italian Freedom must be the work of time. His letter to Lord William Bentinck on the subject presents so good a portrait of his mind, with its utter freedom both from impulse and from theoretical statesmanship, that it is worth extracting :—

“ I shall take care not to compromise any of the parties referred to in your secret letter. I fully approve of your giving the project no countenance ; nor can I bring myself to wish that the too-extensive experiment already in operation throughout Europe, in the science of government, should be at once augmented by similar creations in Italy.

“ It is impossible not to perceive a great moral change coming on in Europe, and that the principles of freedom are in full operation. The danger is, that the transition may be too sudden to ripen into anything likely to make the world better or happier. We have new Constitutions launched in France, Spain, Holland, and Sicily. Let us see the result before we encourage farther attempts. The attempts may be made, and we must abide the consequences ; but I am sure it is better to retard, than accelerate, the operation of this most hazardous principle which is abroad.

“ In Italy it is now the more necessary to abstain, if we wish to act in concert with Austria and Sardinia. Whilst we had to drive the French out of Italy, we were justified in running all risks ;

but the present state of Europe requires no such expedient; and, with a view to general peace and tranquillity, *I should prefer seeing the Italians await the insensible influence of what is going on elsewhere, than hazard their own internal quiet by an effort at this moment.*"—(*Castlereagh Papers*, vol. x. p. 18.)

These are not the words of a man who disbelieved in the value of freedom, or wished to deny its blessings permanently to any race of men. But neither are they the words of a theorist who could see no blessings to be cherished and no interests to be spared outside of his own political ideal. Lord Castlereagh's was not a mind in which excited feelings had destroyed the proportion between different objects of desire. He knew the very different values of the boons for which men indiscriminately clamoured. The graduation in his mind seems to have stood thus: he cared for nationality not at all; for the theoretic perfection of political institutions, very little; for the realities of freedom, a great deal; and for the peace, and social order and freedom from the manifold curses of disturbance, which can alone give to the humbler masses of mankind any chance of tasting their scanty share of human joys—for the sake of this, he was quite ready to forego all the rest. Ambitious hopes or historic sentiments may be gratified by a successful rebellion; but they are the luxuries of the few, while the ruin of war and the cruelties of the conscription are realities that visit all. Lord Castlereagh may be blamed for "abandoning popular rights and the independence of nations;" but in truth he was seeking to lay the foundation on which they must be built, and without which they cannot stand. He was pursuing too lofty an

## PEACE HIS PARAMOUNT OBJECT 63

object to compromise its success for the sake of a liberal propaganda. His whole energies were bent to the one aim of securing that Europe should not again undergo another quarter of a century such as that from which she had just emerged. He sought above all other things so to establish the balance of power that it should not be easily overthrown, and to maintain it jealously as the sole pledge of peace. In all periods of his administration, during the war and after the war, this one paramount object of securing a lasting peace to Europe was the lodestar of his policy. He never suffered it to be obscured for an instant by the smaller gains which were perpetually pressed on him as all-essential by men of hotter natures or feebler minds. The restoration of Venetia's ancient government or Saxony's ancient limits were to him trivialities compared with the rescue of Europe from Napoleon. The sudden and violent introduction of popular institutions among nations to whom they were strange seemed to him a poor and equivocal compensation for the risk of destroying, while it was still fresh and fragile, the European settlement which it had cost so much blood to make. He disliked insurrections for their own sake, because they rarely lead to freedom, while they always endanger peace; but he disliked them still more for the foreign intervention and the foreign annexation of which they are made the mask. He saw that interventions in the internal affairs of other nations on the plea of political sympathy were the real danger to Europe's future peace—the only disguise behind which the ambition of conquest could safely hide itself. Therefore, under his guidance, England always declined to interfere

herself, or to acquiesce in the intervention of others. He refused even to give what is now called "a moral support" to a foreign political party—to interfere in the affairs of other States even with criticisms upon the institutions under which they chose to live. History has amply justified the neutrality which while he lived was bitterly arraigned. At the distance of forty years from the date of his death, we can now judge how much hatred and isolation would have been spared to England if English Ministers had been content to imitate his reserve—how much blood would have been spared to Europe if foreign Cabinets would have learned the regard for the existing rights of smaller States by which his foreign policy was marked.

The very qualities to which his greatness was due have been partly the cause that it has been left to a generation which knew him not to vindicate his name from undeserved reproach. The very immovability of mind which strengthened him to persevere when others faltered, and pause when others were rushing madly on, had the effect of isolating him among contemporary statesmen. He had not the qualities which make a devoted personal following. Except for the merely corporeal advantages of a splendid presence and a graceful bearing, it might be said that he was absolutely devoid of all the qualities by which mankind are fascinated. It was almost a crucial test of the capacity of English politicians to seek for and appreciate statesmanship for its own sake—to value at its true price the gold that does not glitter; and it is to the credit of the ruling classes in this country that they did not fail under the test. In

the House of Commons he was no orator. His sentences were long, wordy, and involved ; his style was bald and ungraceful, and often diluted to vapidity by a studied courtliness of language ; and his metaphors were so exquisitely confused that they are a by-word to this day. His speeches furnished a fund of inexhaustible amusement to the wits of the time. Lord Brougham has left it on record that it was his custom to beguile the weary hours of a debate by making a collection of Lord Castlereagh's choicest gems as they dropped from his lips. They supplied Moore with material for several pungent epigrams, and they were invaluable to men who, like Byron, sought to prove their own liberality and whitewash their own characters by a rancorous abuse of the rulers who rescued Europe from military despotism. Nor was this unfortunate deficiency compensated by any fascination or brilliancy in private intercourse. Lord Castlereagh was neither a wit nor a scholar : he did not shine in conversation, and rarely attempted to take the lead. Neither in the Senate nor the drawing-room did he display any of those showy qualities by which, since bribery fell into disrepute, wavering votes have been ordinarily won. It might have been expected that with all these drawbacks he would have been unable to hold his ground in the House of Commons, and that in Parliamentary campaigns he would have been an encumbrance rather than an assistance to his colleagues. The fact was exactly the reverse. He was during several years their great strength and stay—the only debater on whom the Ministry could confidently rely. The correspondence between him and Lord Liverpool while he was at the Congress of Vienna in the winter of

1814-1815 is a curious evidence of the influence he wielded in the House of Commons. Lord Castlereagh expresses an extreme anxiety to be allowed to see the negotiations to their close, and is quite sure that some of the other Ministers will be able to steer through the first part of the session without this help. But Lord Liverpool, though fully sensible of the importance of the negotiations upon the Polish and Saxon questions, which were then at their warmest, will not hear of his absence. He writes again and again in the most urgent terms to impress upon him that nobody is capable of managing the House of Commons but himself. No one who reads these letters can doubt the earnest sincerity of Lord Liverpool's entreaties. It is impossible not to see that in his judgment the presence in the House of this verbose and blundering orator, at whom his adversaries affected to laugh, was of vital importance to the very existence of the Government. And in this matter at least Lord Liverpool was no mean judge. Whatever his other capabilities may have been, he was a veteran in Parliamentary warfare; and, as his long possession of power amply proved, he knew what style of leadership it was that could win and could keep the confidence of the House of Commons.

Lord Castlereagh's influence in the House must have been enormous, if Lord Liverpool rated it so high as to risk the evils of his absence from Vienna at such a time rather than forego it. In truth his matter was so weighty that it did not suffer materially from the singularly inappropriate language in which it was conveyed. Those times were too critical to leave much room or taste for niceties on the subject of style. The House had been strung

by danger to a higher tone than that of literary fastidiousness. It looked in its leaders for something more sterling than the glitter of eloquence ; and was content to condone the metaphors over which Lord Brougham and Mr. Moore made themselves so merry. Lord Brougham has himself confessed in later times that those who held Lord Castlereagh cheap on account of his style of speaking, cast rather a reproach upon representative government, which ranks eloquence so high among a statesman's qualifications, than upon him. But though esteem and confidence were accorded to him very freely, and were never withdrawn so long as he lived, he does not seem to have awakened warmer feelings. He had not the talents that captivate the imagination, or the warmth of sympathy that kindles love. Men felt to him as to the pilot who had weathered an appalling storm, the physician who had mastered a terrible malady. They recognized his ability, and were glad in a moment of danger to have such a counsellor at hand ; but they do not appear to have been drawn to him by the bonds of that intense personal devotion which has united so many great statesmen with their political supporters. Therefore his influence died with his own death. He was the head of a powerful party in momentous times : he led a nation to the highest pinnacle of renown ; he laid down landmarks of policy which have lasted through many revolutions of opinion and are respected still. But he did not found a school. His name contained no spell to bind together after his death those whom he had influenced in life : none of the tender reverence gathered round his memory with which disciples recall the deeds and treasure up the

sayings of a departed master. Pitt, Canning, Peel, wielded an authority over their friends that endured beyond the grave. Those who had served under them clung to the memory of that service as a bond among themselves which neither divergent opinions nor clashing interests might relax. There were Pittites, and Canningites, and Peelites, long after the death of the statesmen whose names they bore; and their cohesion has in no small degree affected our recent history: but no such adjective, in fact or in idea, has been formed upon the name of Castlereagh.

This effect of his calm, cold, self-contained temperament has undoubtedly in the first instance been damaging to his fame. The claims of other statesmen to the plaudits of posterity have been repeated noisily and indefatigably by bands of devoted admirers. Lord Castlereagh's memory, honoured only by the silent witness of events, has for the moment been thrust aside and neglected. No school of political thinkers have charged themselves in his case with the duty of sweeping away the detraction that gathers upon great men's tombs. But the time has come when these causes should cease to operate. It matters little to us now that his metaphors were Irish, his oratory dull, his temper unsympathizing and cold. We are only concerned to recognize with gratitude the great results of his life—the triumphs that he won, and the peace-loving policy of which those triumphs were made the base. As the events in which he acted recede into the past, the pettier details in his character by which some of his leading contemporaries were repelled disappear altogether from our sight. From the point where we stand now,

nothing is visible but the splendid outlines of the courage, the patience, and the faultless sagacity which contributed so much to liberate Europe and to save England in the crisis of her fate.



**STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT :—I**

#### PREFATORY NOTE

THE first of the two following essays was published in April, 1861; the second in April, 1862. Each of them dealt with two of the four volumes in which Stanhope's "Life of Pitt" originally appeared, and no other authority was prefixed to either of the articles.

The following principal dates of Pitt's life may be convenient to the reader:—

Born 1759. Entered Parliament, 1781. Chancellor of the Exchequer under Shelburne, 1782. Resigned with Shelburne, February, 1783. Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer, December, 1783. French War begins, 1793. Irish Union, 1800. Resigned office, January, 1801. Peace of Amiens, October, 1801. War renewed, May, 1803. Prime Minister again, May, 1804. Melville's condemnation, April, 1805. Battle of Austerlitz, December, 1805. Death, January 22, 1806.

## STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT :—I

IN undertaking to write the Life of his distinguished kinsman, Lord Stanhope is not entering upon absolutely untrodden ground; but his predecessors have done their work so badly, that to the generality of readers a Life of Pitt will be absolutely new. Bishop Tomline's performance has been described, by a high authority, as having the honour of being the worst biography of its size in the world.<sup>1</sup> The small portion of it that is original is undoubtedly distinguished by the solemn emptiness of which the Bishop was an acknowledged master. But the sarcastic observation of a Contemporary Reviewer, that "the work was due less to his lordship's pen than to his lordship's sharp and faithful scissors," is really applicable in almost as great a degree to the work of his predecessor, Mr. John Gifford. Gifford's "Life of Pitt" was conceived on too large a scale, and drew too liberally upon Hansard to be an attractive biography, and a biographer misses his chief function if his performance is not attractive. His business is to increase the fame of his hero, and no hero's fame was ever increased by being associated with a dull compilation. Lord Macaulay's essay in

<sup>1</sup> [Lord Macaulay, "Works," vol. viii. p. 360.]

the “Encyclopædia Britannica” is, indeed, as fascinating as anything that ever issued from his pen; but he was necessarily limited to a very narrow space, and the sketch with which he was forced to content himself is too slight to rank as a biography. The field is, therefore, open to Lord Stanhope practically without competitors. Few persons could be better fitted to perform the task which every Englishman must wish to see done well. The biography of Pitt should not be abandoned, as the biographies of great men too often are, to writers who have no other title to literary fame. A life that was all public, a career so closely intertwined with English history that all its lights and shades correspond with the prosperity or the perils of the whole community, is most fittingly intrusted to the hands of one who holds the first rank among the living historians of England. Lord Stanhope's political position is also favourable to his undertaking. That Pitt's biographer should have been once a House of Commons partisan is almost indispensable to enable him to describe with fidelity a conflict which was carried on almost entirely within its walls; but a very keen interest in the party struggles of the moment would be incompatible with that judicial habit of mind which is of the first necessity in the chronicler of deeds which have been the subject of such embittered controversy. It is natural that high expectations should be excited by a work whose author possesses so many qualifications for his task; and the work itself will not disappoint those who have formed them. It is agreeable and lively in its style, and at the same time exact and ample in its details, without overtasking the reader's attention by the reprint of tedious State

papers or of the jejune and lifeless abstracts which are all that is left to us of the oratory of those times. Its solid merits as an historical contribution will be generally recognized. The pleasantness of the style does not rob the narrative of its impartiality. In respect to transactions and questions some of which affect us very nearly even now, it may not be possible to maintain an absolute impartiality ; but Lord Stanhope seems to have approached more nearly than any previous writer upon the same period to this unattainable ideal. Indeed, his gentleness of judgment often overshoots the requirements of equity ; it amounts to optimism. He describes the proceedings of an age when political corruption had not died out, and faction was looked upon rather as a merit than a sin, with as large a charity and as unsuspicious a faith in the virtue of politicians as if he were writing of our own quieter and purer times. It is, undoubtedly, a fault on the right side. Readers will be more competent and more willing to temper Lord Stanhope's mercy with justice than to perform the opposite process ; and his kindlier judgments and roseate views are very agreeable reading, and leave pleasant illusions on the mind, just as a Richmond head<sup>1</sup> is pleasanter to look at than a photograph, though one may not be able to repress the consciousness that it overflatters the grim human reality.

The materials already in existence for the history of this period are very ample, and have been long before the world. Lord Stanhope, however, brings to the common stock some new

<sup>1</sup> [George Richmond, R.A., b. 1809, d. 1896, the celebrated portrait-painter.]

contributions of very considerable interest. Pitt's letters to his mother, his correspondence with his friend the Duke of Rutland,<sup>1</sup> and the King's letters to him, have been committed to Lord Stanhope's care, and are either printed at length in these volumes, or worked up into the narrative. That they should introduce any new facts into a history which has been so exhaustively investigated was, of course, not to be expected; but they enable him to give fresh life to an old story, and, here and there, to throw a new light upon a controverted question. His suggestion, for instance, that Lord Temple's sudden retirement from office, two days after he had overthrown the Coalition, was due to his indignation at not being able to extract a dukedom out of George the Third, will probably be accepted henceforth as the solution of that mysterious episode. It is certainly more probable than the theory of that most inaccurate of chroniclers, Wraxall,<sup>2</sup> which both Lord Macaulay and Mr. Massey<sup>3</sup> have endorsed, that he retired in disgust because he could not procure an immediate dissolution. Lord Stanhope produces a letter of George the Third's, hitherto unpublished, which proves that the King was very angry at Temple's desertion on this occasion, and stigmatized it as "base conduct;" yet no one pressed an immediate

<sup>1</sup> [1754–1787. Lord Steward and Privy Councillor in 1783, but resigned on the formation of the Coalition. He became Lord Privy Seal and then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland (where he died) under Pitt.]

<sup>2</sup> [1751–1831. Author of "Historical Memoirs of my own Time," and "Posthumous Memoirs," both wholly untrustworthy. M.P. from 1774–1794.]

<sup>3</sup> [1809–1881. Author of "History of George III.'s Reign." At this time Liberal Member for Salford.]

dissolution more anxiously upon Mr. Pitt than the King himself, and he was not likely to treat as "base conduct" an over-zealous maintenance of the same opinion. On the other hand, Temple's later correspondence betrays that he had at some earlier period asked for a dukedom, and that he was very sore at having been refused.<sup>1</sup> The hint which is furnished by the worthlessness of the excuse which he instructed his brother, Mr. W. Grenville,<sup>2</sup> to make in the House of Commons, deserves, too, to be taken into consideration. It was to the effect that Temple had resigned, in order to be in a better position for repelling the charges<sup>3</sup> that had been made against him in that House. But the charges had been made before he took office, so that, if they

<sup>1</sup> A letter of Mr. W. Grenville's, to which Lord Stanhope has not adverted, shows that about eight months before, while Temple was still in Ireland, he was scheming to obtain a step in the peerage, and was only withheld from pressing it on the King by the King's resolution to grant no patents while Fox was Minister. It therefore strongly confirms the idea that he seized the first moment after Fox's fall and his own accession to office to urge his claim. The following is the passage, in a letter dated April 1, 1783 :—

" You will observe that part of the King's ground is a resistance to advancements as well as to creations. This seemed naturally to throw so much difficulty upon your object that I thought there would be an indelicacy in pressing it at the time you were lamenting the unavoidable difficulties under which he already labours. This delay I firmly believe will be very short indeed."

<sup>2</sup> [1759-1834. Became Lord Grenville and Foreign Secretary 1791. Resigned, with Pitt, in 1801; and quarrelled with him in 1804. He was head of the "All the Talents" Ministry of 1806-7, and afterwards withdrew more and more from public life.]

<sup>3</sup> [Lord Temple had been commissioned by the King to secure a majority in the House of Lords against Fox's India Bill, which was done. The House of Commons thereupon passed a resolution denouncing the proceeding, and charging Temple and Pitt with back-stairs intrigues.]

were enough to induce him to resign it, they would have been enough to induce him never to accept it. Every one appears to be agreed that the reason thus publicly given was not the true one; but if there had not been something in his reason for retiring which he was ashamed of publishing, he never would have put forward a transparently false one in its stead. The most sensitive of men, which Temple was not, would hardly feel that it was disgraceful to have had his advice on a matter of mere tactics overruled; but most people would be rather ashamed of letting it be known that they had abandoned their Sovereign in a grave emergency because an extra title had been refused them.

The letters of George the Third are the most interesting part of the new matter contributed by Lord Stanhope. They give a very different picture of the King from that which has been drawn by partisan humourists and pamphleteers. They show a shrewd and intelligent mind, thoroughly familiar with public affairs. The style of them is hasty, the grammar not always irreproachable; but the sound and practical character of the King's opinions would have done honour to persons who have far more opportunities of mixing with the world than can ever fall to the lot of monarchs. A taste for useless and costly wars has often been made the reproach of his policy. How ill those who make this charge have appreciated the real nature of his convictions and inclinations, the following extract will sufficiently prove. It is a letter written to Mr. Pitt on the occasion of the introduction of the Sinking Fund. Some portions of it read like selections from one of Mr. Bright's attacks upon Foreign-Office diplomacy:—

"Considering Mr. Pitt has had the unpleasant office of providing for the expenses incurred by the last war, it is but just he should have the full merit he deserves of having the public know and feel that he has now proposed a measure that will render the nation again respectable, if she has the sense to remain quiet some years, and not by wanting to take a showy part in the transactions of Europe again become the dupe of other Powers, and from ideal greatness draw herself into lasting distress. The old English saying is applicable to our situation : 'England must cut her coat according to her cloth.'"

The King's manner, like his style, never did justice to the sterling value of the shrewd thought and honest emotions that it concealed. Mankind, and especially literary mankind, are the ready dupes of a squib, or of a caricature; and one ridiculous trait or habit will often outweigh in their judgment a whole catalogue of virtues. George the Third's celebrated "What, what?" has made a deeper impression upon the minds of the writers of the last thirty years than all the coarseness of his grandfather, or the still graver failings of his son. The letters published in these volumes will do something to restore to its proper place in public estimation the character of a Monarch who may have committed errors, but who has been systematically maligned, not on account of those errors, but on account of his hostility to the profligate statesman whom the Whigs have delighted to honour.

Two volumes of the biography have been published, extending as far as the year 1796: two more, which will conclude the work, will shortly follow. The earlier portion of the biography, which deals with the brief interval that elapsed

80 STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT:—I

before he became a public leader, is enriched with a considerable number of Pitt's letters to his mother. They, of course, give a clearer insight into the character of the man than it is possible to obtain when once the possession of political power had made communicativeness a crime. As his life advanced, and both business and secrets multiplied upon him, his private correspondence became much more scanty. He could no longer speak freely on the subjects nearest to his heart. His whole life was given up to politics, and politics was precisely the subject on which he was bound to be discreet. Consequently, his letters come at rarer intervals, and are written in a tone which, though kindly, is obviously constrained.

We shall not accompany Lord Stanhope in the earliest stages of his biography. In a previous number of this Journal (No. 194)<sup>1</sup> we followed Pitt through his boyhood and earliest youth, and through his first political struggles—his acceptance of office under Lord Shelburne, when Fox resigned in pique at Lord Shelburne's appointment—his expulsion from power upon the question of the American peace by the Coalition of Fox and North, who had opposed each other all their lives—and his recall to it as Prime Minister, when the King took advantage of the India Bill to dismiss the Coalition. We need not recount how the dismissed Ministers defeated him in division after division—how his popularity grew rapidly in the country in spite of the most threatening resolutions of the House of Commons—how he closed the contest by an appeal to the country—and how the appeal was answered by a majority which secured his supremacy for

<sup>1</sup> [In an article by another hand.]

life. A conflux of strangely mingled causes had combined to raise him to an eminence which no other English statesman has occupied since England ceased to be despotically ruled. To the measureless astonishment of his adversaries he had, at the age of twenty-four, scattered by his own single arm a combination of all that was eloquent and all that was powerful in the House of Commons. They had never dreamed of such an issue. It had occurred to them as a possibility that the King's undisguised dislike of Fox might break out into action and cause them a temporary reverse. Their letters show that they were not blind to the possible contingency of a short sojourn in Opposition ; but they never harboured a doubt that their huge majority would force the King to swallow his antipathies and submit to them again. In the House of Commons at least they thought that they were unassailable. The idea of danger there never crossed the mind of the most despondent. The numbers who, during the last ten years, had formed the opposing hosts in Parliamentary campaigns were now united into a single phalanx. The debaters who had so often in eloquent periods besought the nation to believe in each other's incapacity and treason, were now rallied under a common standard, and were prepared to combine their vituperations against any one who should attempt to dispute their supremacy. There was no visible power that could make head against such an array in the existing House of Commons ; and the leaders of the Coalition had persuaded themselves that an appeal to the constituencies would only add fresh strength to their position.

And yet when the trial came they were defeated  
VOL. I. M

by a mere youth, with no majority, no eloquent supporters, no organized party-following, no antecedent fame. He not only utterly routed them, but he captured all the standards under which they had fought. He proved himself the real owner of the watchwords they had stolen, the true champion of the various interests which they had once defended, and which by coalescing they had betrayed. Lord North had served the King obsequiously for years, had based his political position on the King's favour, and, for the sake of retaining it, had made himself the King's tool when the King was manifestly in the wrong. Fox had been the popular champion, railing at courtly corruption and royal power, and disdaining no arts of faction and no extravagance of invective to exalt the people and to degrade the King. Yet it was by the strength of King and people combined that Pitt overthrew their coalition. We should be inclined, in spite of Lord Macaulay's dictum,<sup>1</sup> to place here at the very beginning the true culmination of Mr. Pitt's career. At a later period he gained a wider power, and was the object of a more unbounded adoration. But the greatness of an achievement is measured by the magnitude of the obstacles in the face of which it has been performed. To have gained this great power in the first instance was a more searching trial of strength than to have maintained it when it was gained. To estimate the difficulties which Pitt had surmounted when the nation at his appeal sent back an overwhelming majority to support him against all which had hitherto borne authority in Parliament, it is necessary to remember that North, Fox, Sheridan,

<sup>1</sup> [Macaulay places the culmination at the time of the recovery of the King in 1788, after the Regency debates.]

and Burke were his opponents, that he had no single eloquent debater at his side, that he had no past performances to appeal to as his credentials for future trust, and that he took office in consequence of a transaction in which he indeed had no share, but which might well be looked on with disfavour by all who were jealous for the Constitution. To have conquered all these obstacles, to have reduced in the course of two months' debating a majority of 104 to a majority of one, and to have so entirely converted public opinion in the course of that short struggle that his rivals never held up their heads again, was an achievement that no English statesman ever performed before, and no English statesman is ever likely to repeat.

Many explanations of a success so startling have been suggested by various narrators, according to their respective prepossessions. Fox himself used to attribute a large share of it to the wonderful popularity of the Carlo Khan caricature:<sup>1</sup> Lord John Townshend,<sup>2</sup> who was one of Fox's most intimate friends, referred it all to the "wrong-headed intemperance" of Mr. Burke. Mr. Wright,<sup>3</sup> whose judgment is disturbed by a bias perhaps more violent than even that of Lord John Russell, talks of the power of the King, and of the slanders

<sup>1</sup> [Published on December 5, 1783, representing Fox riding in triumph into Leadenhall Street on North as an elephant led by Burke.]

<sup>2</sup> [1757-1833. Brother of the Second Marquis of Townshend. He, with Lord North's son George North, was mainly instrumental in contriving the Coalition. The phrase quoted is from a letter to Lord Holland : Russell's "Memorials of Fox," ii. p. 23.]

<sup>3</sup> [1790?-1877. A Miscellaneous writer; Master of Tewkesbury Grammar School. The passages referred to are in "England under the House of Hanover," vol. ii. chap. x.]

propagated by the Court party. But the power of the King had not availed to save Lord Shelburne; and the party which could boast of the pen of Captain Morris<sup>1</sup> and the pencil of Rowlandson ought not to have shrunk from a contest in which slander and ridicule were the weapons. Lord John Russell in much the same spirit refers it to the "perverse skill and fatal dexterity" of Mr. Pitt's partisans. Skill and dexterity are not rare qualities in politicians; but it is very rarely that they are rewarded by a triumph so overwhelming as that which condemned Fox to a life-long opposition. Lord Stanhope takes into account many combining causes. He allows for the halo of romantic veneration that still gathered round the memory of Chatham, for the young Minister's own transcendent talents, and for the apprehensions of the terrified corporations whom no party discipline availed to pacify when once they heard of the provisions of the India Bill, and Lee's unfortunate defence of it: "What is a charter? A parchment with a seal dangling at one end of it."<sup>2</sup> But Lord Stanhope justly attributes the chief efficacy in producing that tremendous revulsion of national feeling to causes of far deeper and more permanent operation. The general support which Pitt obtained pointed to stronger influences than any merely temporary disgust. It was the judgment of the nation, pronounced at last, after long and patient

<sup>1</sup> [1745–1838. He was Captain in the 2nd Life Guards, and a notorious writer of Whig songs and *vers de société*. His line, "The sweet shady side of Pall Mall," is still often quoted.]

<sup>2</sup> [Lee was Attorney-General in the Coalition. He made the observation quoted in his speech on the third reading of Fox's India Bill.]

forbearance, against the revolting factiousness of which their dearest interests had for so many years been made the sport. They had borne it long, seemingly acquiescent, as is the English custom, while faction wrestled with faction, and clique with clique, for the division of the rich spoil which then was the reward of power. The factions mistook the meaning of this apathy, and construed it as consent. They would not recognize the gradual accumulation of silent disgust which their acts were causing in the public mind. They imagined that every accession of numbers from whatever quarter was a help to office, and that every majority, no matter how gained, was a triumph. It is a sort of error not peculiar to the politicians of that day. It has infected almost every generation of Parliamentary combatants since Parliamentary government began. There is no blindness so unaccountable as the blindness of English statesmen to the political value of a character. Living only in and for the House of Commons, moving in an atmosphere of constant intrigue, accustomed to look upon oratory as a mode of angling for political support and upon political professions as only baits of more or less attractiveness, they acquire a very peculiar code of ethics, and they are liable wholly to lose sight of the fact that there is a stiffer and less corrupted morality out of doors. They not only come to forget what is right, but they forget that there is any one who knows it. The educated thought of England, before the bar of whose opinion all political conduct must appear, measures the manœuvres of politicians by no more lenient code than that which it applies to the affairs of private life. Ordinary men cannot easily bring themselves

86 STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT:—I

to pass over, as judicious tactics in a statesman, the conduct which in their next-door neighbours they would condemn as impudent insincerity. On the other hand, the politician cannot bring himself to believe that the party strategy and personal competition which are everything to his mind, are trifles too slight to think about in the eyes of the nation he serves. He goes on with his game of chess, in which mighty principles and deep-seated sentiments are the pawns to be sacrificed or exchanged as the moment's convenience may suggest, in the simple faith that this is the real business which he has been sent to Parliament to transact. And thus we have had the spectacle, even in later days, of party leaders of considerable intellect laboriously and carefully ruining themselves in the esteem of the nation, and heaping blunder upon blunder, from which the meanest of their followers would have been competent to warn them. They have failed because they have been blind to the elementary truth, that a character for unselfish honesty is the only secure passport to the confidence of the English people. Its place can never be supplied by fine speeches or dexterous manœuvres. Eighty years ago the error was commoner than it is now, in proportion as the morality of the governing classes was relatively lower in comparison with that of the nation at large. The combination of politicians whom the King had just driven from his councils were especially the victims of this delusion. At the crisis of their fate it never seems to have occurred to them that their past political conduct could possibly have injured their popularity with the nation.

Fox had begun life as a Tory, and had suddenly

plunged in a moment of pique<sup>1</sup> into the opposite extreme—had opposed the American war to turn out North, and had opposed the American peace to turn out Shelburne—and had then combined for the sake of office with the very man whom he had spent the flower of his political life in denouncing as treacherous and corrupt. The language in which he and Burke had denounced North up to the very eve of their junction far exceeded in acrimony what would now be tolerated in Parliament. Few things told so powerfully against the Coalition as a collection of the most abusive of these passages, published under the title of “*Beauties of Fox and Burke.*” Only two years before the Coalition Fox had told Lord North that he trusted that, “by the aroused indignation and vengeance of an injured and undone people, the Ministers would hear of the calamities of the American war at the tribunal of justice, and expiate them on the public scaffold.” Barely twelve months before he became Lord North’s political ally, he told the House of Commons that, “from the moment when he should make any terms with one of them [the Ministers], he would rest satisfied to be called the most infamous of mankind. He could not for an instant think of a coalition with men who, in every public and private transaction as Ministers, had shown themselves void of every principle of honour and honesty. In the hands of such men he would not trust his honour for a minute.” The public

<sup>1</sup> [In 1770 Fox had joined Lord North’s Ministry. In 1772 he resigned, partly on account of private grievances against North, and partly because he disapproved the Royal Marriage Bill. He returned to office the same year; but early in 1774 the King procured his dismissal, and Fox became a Whig.]

naturally took him at his word, and believed him to be, what by anticipation he had named himself, the most infamous of men. Burke had made almost equal shipwreck of his good fame. His abuse of Lord North had scarcely been less violent, and his proceedings in and out of office were more glaringly in contrast. In opposition he had distinguished himself by his unsparing assaults upon the laxity, and worse than laxity, with which the public money was administered in those times. He was the great champion of economical reform. But the difference between theory and practice was very painful. One of his first acts, as member of the Coalition Government, was to restore to office two clerks<sup>1</sup> who had been dismissed by Pitt, and were at the moment undergoing a criminal prosecution for embezzlement of public money. This was a sad commentary on much passionate declamation against ministerial corruption. Some of his old speeches upon Indian matters too were recalled to memory by his brilliant efforts upon Fox's India Bill. A short time before he had denounced a proposal for putting an end to the Charter of the East India Company with characteristic exuberance of language as "the most wicked, absurd, abandoned, profligate, and drunken intention ever formed." When the public saw the same rich vocabulary exhausted for the purpose of eulogizing a similar proposal, they naturally treated the praise and the blame as equally insincere. By the light of these contrasts they learned to look on the opposition to Lord North in the first instance, and the alliance

<sup>1</sup> [They were called Powell and Bembridge. Powell committed suicide, and Bembridge was convicted. Powell was supposed to have had some financial connection with the Burkes.]

with Lord North in the second, as nothing more than so many different leads in the game of which office was the stake. The later performances of the Coalition only confirmed the impressions which its formation had spread abroad. The shreds of character which these various transactions had left to it were torn from it by the discovery of the *coup d'état* which lurked in the machinery of the India Bill. Lord John Russell has attempted to defend this celebrated plot for "taking the crown off the King's head and placing it on Mr. Fox's," by pleading that the Board which was to wield in his interest irresponsible power over £300,000 worth of patronage, was only appointed for four years. Mr. Massey has justly replied that that circumstance would only make them more desperately eager to keep in office the Ministry that was likely to reappoint them. But Lord Stanhope suggests the real answer to modern admirers who attempt to represent this outrageous effort of faction as a misconstrued act of patriotism. If there had been in Fox's mind the faintest desire that the vast patronage of India should be used for any other purpose but to keep him in office, it would have been easy for him to have given effect to it by nominating a neutral Board. The composition of the Board was the real touchstone of the character of the Bill. That the new Commissioners were, every one of them, thorough-going partisans, bound by every political and family tie to do the bidding of the Coalition, is the best proof that the Bill was proposed in order to secure the ends which they were best fitted to serve. The greediness of place, of which this intrigue convinced the most unsuspecting, stimulated the King to struggle against his

captors, and disenchanted the nation of their last illusion touching the patriotism of the Rockingham Whigs. The Sovereign and his people, after many differences, were at last of one mind in this, that they were sick at heart of the selfish ambition which the great Revolution houses had masked for so long under patriotic phrases. When the empire was parting asunder, and the finances seemed collapsing under their colossal load of debt, they were weary of entrusting their destinies to men who fought the fight of principle in the spirit of political *condottieri*. This was the peculiar advantage which fortune threw into Pitt's hands, and which he improved with so much skill. Men were in a temper to yield themselves to almost any candidate for their favour who was untainted with the intrigues they had endured so long. They turned to Mr. Pitt, in spite of his youth and his apparent want of Parliamentary support, as the only man who could free them from the dominion of selfish faction. His character stood high; his moral purity said something for his principle; his known pride was some guarantee for self-respect; and at least, if untried, he was unpolluted. His celebrated refusal of the Clerkship of the Pells<sup>1</sup> evinced that from the love of money he was absolutely free. This contrast between his character and that of his opponents was the true secret of the marvellous rapidity with which he rose to the head of affairs. Birth, eloquence, royal favour, would have done very little to secure him

<sup>1</sup> [On January 11, 1784, this sinecure office, worth £3000 a year, fell vacant. Pitt, though with little or no money beyond his official income, which was, as all then thought, highly precarious, bestowed the office on Colonel Barré, on condition that he gave up a pension of like amount.]

## FACTIOUSNESS OF THE OPPOSITION 91

such a triumph, but for the blindness with which the Coalition laid bare to the public eye the meanness of motive and the hollowness of conviction which underlay the fiercely phrased patriotism of all existing statesmen.

The same contrast which raised him continued to be his chief support. Throughout his career it was a comparison of character, far more than of measures or of eloquence, that formed his great political strength. His opponents fell lower and lower in public esteem, and fully justified the national condemnation which the Coalition had provoked.

They still continued to possess all the powers of eloquence and all the social fascinations which had made them so powerful before. The masterpieces of oratory which constitute the fame of Fox, Burke, and Sheridan, were delivered during their long exile from office. But the old curse clave to them. They remained as blind as ever to the value of political character, and never compassed sufficient foresight to forego a single chance of inflicting a temporary embarrassment upon their rival's Government.

They took the earliest opportunity of practising this suicidal strategy. One of the earliest objects that attracted Pitt's attention was the reform of the commercial code which, at that time, stifled the industry of the country. The system of prohibitions was maintained, not only towards foreign countries, in which case it was at least consistent with the extreme theories of protection then generally entertained, but towards Ireland, whose prosperity and progress were indissolubly linked with our own. Mr. Pitt—the first Minister who entered at all into

the philosophy of Free Trade, which modern Whigs are rather apt to boast of, as if they had first discovered it, and had never been particularly enthusiastic the other way—applied himself to remove this glaring financial evil. Of course his proposals excited a violent panic among the Lancashire manufacturers, who were the great protectionists of those days. Their mills would be stopped, their hands thrown out of work ; the cheaper labour of Ireland would inevitably drive them out of the English market. A proposal to allow Ireland to share in the benefits of the colonial trade was represented as a death-blow to the Navigation Laws, and as being certain to make Cork the emporium of the empire. This silly panic was an embarrassment to Pitt, but it was one which the party led by Fox and Burke were specially beholden to allay. In them, if in any one, should have been found the champions of the new truth against the ancient error, of the welfare of the nation against the vested interests of the few. Burke was bound to have supported the measure by every tie of honour as well as of patriotism. When he sat in opposition to Lord North he had supported with all his powers a similar measure of relief, and had resigned his seat at Bristol rather than give way to the self-seeking clamour of his mercantile constituents. But in 1785 he had lost all relish for a Free-trade policy, when it was discredited by the advocacy of Pitt. Fox and Lord North were equally bound by their own previous measures to a temperate treatment of the differences between England and Ireland. It was under Fox's government that the supremacy of the British over the Irish Parliament had been abandoned ; and this, though undoubtedly

## IRELAND AND THE OPPOSITION 93

a necessary measure, had been the beginning of Irish troubles. It was under Lord North's administration that Ireland had been suffered to create the army of Volunteers, whose first act was to dictate their own terms to the Government of England.<sup>1</sup> But, in spite of the responsibility thus incurred, none of these three statesmen shrank from using the antipathy of English and Irish as the lever of a factious opposition. They threw themselves alternately on one side and the other. First Fox tried to improve to the utmost the discontent of the manufacturers, urging for delay to enable them to agitate, and stigmatizing Pitt's proposal as "an attempt to make Ireland the grand arbitress of all the commercial interests of the empire." By these tactics he succeeded in forcing Pitt to recede from some of his original propositions, and to give a more English colour to the scheme. No sooner was this effected than he changed his tone. He and his coadjutors now became keenly sensitive to Irish wrongs, and to the objections that might be taken from an Irish point of view: and though, of course, they were not likely by this manœuvre to injure the measure in London, they entertained well-founded hopes that their taunts and misrepresentations would damn it in Dublin. Fox, while he still described the plan as "a tame surrender of the manufactures and commerce of England," protested that Ireland, if she accepted it, would be "resigning her legislative independence;" Burke designated

<sup>1</sup> [In 1778 Volunteers had been raised in the North of Ireland to repel an apprehended French invasion. The movement spread rapidly, and it was partly the fear of their power that induced the British Government in 1782 to free the Irish Parliament from the control of the Privy Council and the British Parliament.]

certain compensatory payments that she was to make as the tribute of a conquered country ; and Sheridan dared the Irish Parliament to pass such degrading resolutions, and appealed to the Irish people to rise against them if they did. This reckless style of warfare did not fail of its effect. It has never been hard to goad the Irish into jealousy of English policy ; least of all, when they were still in the fresh enjoyment of a newly achieved emancipation. A cry was raised against the measure far more furious than that which had greeted it in England, and the unblushing factiousness of the English Opposition was rewarded by the abandonment of the Bill.

What they had done against Ireland it was too much to expect that they should not do, or attempt to do, against France. Burke had already swallowed his convictions upon Free Trade ; and Fox, who openly avowed that he never could understand the science of political economy, had no convictions to swallow. They had no difficulty, therefore, in combining to resist the French treaty of commerce, of which the abandonment of the Methuen Treaty<sup>1</sup> was, as far as regards England, the main provision. At the present day, under our existing financial burdens, the very name of French treaty disgusts us. Like many of Pitt's measures, it has been discredited by the unintelligent mimicry of later imitators. But this was a scheme which really did fulfil its promise, of swelling revenue and stimulating trade. It was a measure beyond its age, and very

<sup>1</sup> [By the Methuen Treaty, concluded between Portugal and England by John Methuen in 1703, Portugal agreed to admit English woollens in return for a preference of one-third in favour of Portuguese as against French wines. By Pitt's treaty of 1786 it was provided, among other things, that French wines were to pay no higher duties than those then imposed on Portuguese wines.]

much beyond the Liberal leaders of 1787. If they had based their objections to it on the same narrow ground as that which they adopted in opposing Pitt's Irish policy, they would simply have deserved the charge of being laggards in the march of progress of which they professed to lead the van. But this time they had no encouragement for the display of their intense protectionism. The manufacturers had learned to feel so much confidence in Pitt, that they did not venture to dispute his dicta on a matter of finance. It was no use, therefore, this time to talk of a "tame surrender of our commerce," Accordingly, they were driven to take a position in point of statesmanship more humiliating still. As they had succeeded before by a declamatory appeal to national antipathies, they hoped to succeed by the same means again. On the very first night of the session Fox thundered against the idea of any concert or alliance with the French, long before he had an idea what that alliance was likely to be. When it was brought before the House he argued in the same strain. France was the hereditary foe of England, and it was incredible that she could have agreed to a treaty, unless it concealed some device to injure us. Grey, who made his maiden speech on this occasion, reiterated the assertion that no French assurances were to be believed. Burke maintained that the two nations had been established by nature to balance each other, and seemed to think there was something impious in converting them into allies. Francis invoked the shade of Chatham, and taunted Pitt with blasting the triumphs of his father's administration, and making friends of his father's foes. But topics of this kind were the last resource of desperation. The time

had gone by when they could influence the House of Commons, or blind even a popular constituency to the advantages of a pacific policy. The French treaty passed both houses by a large majority ; and the opposition to it produced no other result than to furnish a new proof that in Fox's hands Whiggism meant the advocacy of all that was ignorant, antiquated, and narrow.

Such a policy as this, pursued by the advocates of peace and progress, only confirmed the general impression that there were no principles, however cherished, of which Fox would not cheerfully lighten himself in the race for office. He appears rather to have been guided by a passionate instinct of rivalry than by any definite calculation of the political benefit which his proceedings were likely to yield. But whether it was antagonistic impulse or blundering ambition that shaped his course, the utter absence of definite convictions was equally manifest throughout the whole of it. It is difficult to say exactly what he did seek, or whether his own exaltation or the humiliation of Pitt was nearest to his heart. But it is quite clear that what he did *not* seek was the triumph of any set of principles in which he believed. If proof were still wanting, his conduct on the Regency question supplied it. To construct Fox's distinctive creed is not a very easy matter from a modern point of view. In practice he was the antagonist of Pitt ; in theory he professed to be a Whig. But he had very little in common either with the Whigs who went before him, or the Whigs who have come after him. Fox voted with Pitt on Reform, though he never introduced a Reform Bill himself, turned him out of office for supporting peace, and threw out

his measure for securing retrenchment. There was one point, and one only, upon which any kinship of opinion can be established between his party, the Revolution Whigs, and the Whigs of our own day, and that was the desire, which all three professed, to exalt the authority of Parliament in relation to that of the Crown. He and Burke had supported Dunning's celebrated motion that "the influence of the Crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished." This language they had held with tolerable consistency up to the year 1788, and could point to it with pride as their solitary remnant of consistency. But an unfaltering opposition to a King who has declared himself to be your irreconcilable opponent is a very easy exhibition of political principle. Would he fold the cloak of his patriotism so closely round him when Court sunshine began to warm him? He was never actually tried. The smiles of royalty never lightened his career from the beginning to the end. But on one occasion, for a few short weeks, he thought that he saw in front of him a faint glimmer of that invigorating ray; and the extraordinary metamorphosis which this distant gleam effected in his principles enables us to judge what sort of Minister he would have been if fate had destined him for a Court favourite. The Regency crisis was one of those sharp and searching ordeals which put men's principles to the test, and show how much of them is lacquer, how much genuine metal.

The illness of George the Third towards the end of 1788, while it seemed likely to arrest Pitt's career in the full tide of his success, offered a prospect of recovery to the desperate fortunes of

Fox. Whether the King died or went mad, the Prince of Wales must succeed to the Royal power; and the Prince of Wales was Fox's friend, bound to him by all the ties that unite men who have drunk at the same debauch, and gamed at the same tables. The novelty of the prospect that burst on both the rival statesmen was startlingly sudden. To Fox it was an undreamed-of opening to power and fame; to Pitt it was the menace of irretrievable ruin. He had little or no private fortune; he was deeply in debt; and he had scorned to provide himself with any of the sinecures in which statesmen of limited means were wont to find a harbour of refuge. The contrast between the conduct of the two antagonists in this unexpected crisis was of a piece with the contrast that had marked their whole lives. The Minister displayed the same singleness of purpose, the same lofty disregard of his private interest, that he exhibited throughout his whole career. He took precisely the course that was most just to the King and most salutary to the country, but which was also the course that seemed most fatal to himself. He could easily have saved himself from all risk, if he had chosen to do so. He might have imitated the conduct of the Coalition, and have used his present majority for the purpose of securing himself a long lease of power. Precedents were not wanting for such a course. There was no precedent of the appointment of a Regent exactly in point to the present emergency; for the case of an insane Sovereign, with an heir-apparent of full age, had never before occurred in English history. But the contingent appointment of a Regent in case of the demise of the Crown during the heir's nonage was a precaution

that had been frequently observed; and in such cases it had been usual to appoint a Council of Regency to control the executive power of the Regent. Pitt might, with great show of reason, have acted on a precedent which would have prevented the Prince of Wales from disturbing a Ministry to which he was known to be hostile, and to which the King was known to be attached. We know that the Opposition leaders entertained no doubt of his power of carrying some such scheme into effect. But Pitt had come to the conclusion that a more vigorous executive was necessary than a Council of Regency could be expected to furnish, and therefore he resolved that the Regent should choose his own Ministers as he liked, though he was aware that the first exercise of that power would be his own dismissal.

"The part of Pitt was promptly taken. It was, as his part was ever, straightforward and direct. He would listen to no terms for himself. He would consider only his bounden duty to his afflicted King. He would, by the authority of Parliament, impose some restrictions on the Regency for a limited time, so that the Sovereign might resume his power without difficulty in case his reason were restored. What might be the just limits or the necessary period of such restrictions he had not yet decided, and was still revolving in his mind. But he had never the least idea, as his opponents feared, of a Council of Regency which might impede the Prince in the choice of a new administration. On the contrary, Pitt looked forward to his own immediate dismissal from the public service, and he had determined to return to the practice of his profession at the Bar.

"Far different was the course of Thurlow.

13335

Under an appearance of rugged honesty he concealed no small amount of selfish craft. He was ready to grasp at an overture, and it was not long ere an overture came. Two gentlemen in the Prince's confidence—the Comptroller of his Household, Captain Payne, more commonly called Jack Payne, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan—had set their heads together. Was it not to be feared that Pitt would attempt to fetter the coming Regency with some restrictions? And by whom could that attempt be more effectually prevented than by the statesman holding the Great Seal? How important then, if possible, to gain him over!

"With these views, and with the Prince's sanction, a secret negotiation with Lord Thurlow was begun. It was proposed to him that he should do his utmost to defeat any restrictions on the Regent, and that in return he should become President of the Council in the new administration. But the offer of the Presidency was spurned by Thurlow; he insisted on still retaining the Great Seal. This was a more difficult matter, from the engagements of the Prince, and indeed of the whole Fox party, to Lord Loughborough. Sheridan, however, strongly pressed that Lord Thurlow should be secured upon his own terms. The Prince agreed, and the negotiation was continued without Lord Loughborough. The bargain was struck, or all but struck, awaiting only Fox's sanction when he should arrive from Italy.

"The perfidy of Thurlow in this transaction stands little in need of comment. To this day it forms the main blot upon his fame. Nowhere in our recent annals shall we readily find any adequate parallel to it, except indeed in the career of his contemporary and his rival, Loughborough.

"Lord Thurlow succeeded at first in concealing all knowledge of the scheme from Pitt. In this he was much assisted by the fact that from this time forward the Cabinet Councils were frequently held

at Windsor, thus affording him good opportunities for slipping round in secret to the apartments of the Prince of Wales. But a very slight incident brought to light the mystery. His cabals were detected by his own hat. Thus used the story to be told by a later survivor from these times, my lamented friend Mr. Thomas Grenville.<sup>1</sup> One day when a Council was to be held at Windsor, Thurlow had been there some time before any of his colleagues arrived. He was to be brought back to London in the carriage of one of them, and the moment of departure being come, the Chancellor's hat was nowhere to be found. After long search, one of the pages came running up with the hat in his hand, and saying aloud, "My Lord, I found it in the closet of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales." The other Ministers were still in the hall waiting for their carriages, and the evident confusion of Lord Thurlow corroborated the inference which they drew.

"Thus might Pitt suspect, or much more than suspect, the Chancellor's double-dealings. But still he had no positive proof of them; and he might feel as the younger Agrippina, that in many cases the best defence against treachery is to seem unconscious of it. Thus, maintaining his usual lofty calmness, he forbore from all inquiry, all expostulation."

It was the second time that Pitt had been able to show, on a splendid scale, how mean a thing in his eyes was the possession of office, or even the attainment of a bare competence, compared to the

<sup>1</sup> [1755-1846. He was brother of Lords Buckingham and Grenville. He was an Old Whig, and joined Pitt at the time of the Revolution. He held office under his brother after the death of Pitt, and retired from politics in 1807, devoting himself to collecting books.]

furtherance of the public weal. The English, whatever other errors of judgment they commit, are seldom backward in expressing their admiration of disinterestedness; and they did not fail to recognize it in the present instance. All the brilliancy of his opponents failed to draw from the nation the smallest of those tokens of admiration which were readily yielded to Pitt's upright and loyal statesmanship. In 1784 the people testified their value for him by consigning 160 of Fox's friends to private life. In 1790 a new batch of victims testified to their increased and settled esteem. In 1788 there was no question of elections, but the admiration that his conduct elicited was expressed, if possible, in a still more striking way.

"But during the interval he received a most signal token of the public esteem and approbation. It was well known by the public that Pitt would not be continued one hour in office by the Regent. It was known that he had already taken measures for returning to his first profession. It was also known, perhaps, that his neglect of his private affairs had involved him in some debts, which he trusted to discharge by an industrious application of his talents at the Bar. At this very time, however, there was held, by public advertisement, a meeting of the principal bankers and moneyed men of London, anxious to tender him on his retirement from office a substantial mark of their esteem. The sum of £50,000 was first proposed, but so great was the enthusiasm that in the space of forty-eight hours this sum was doubled, and Mr. George Rose,<sup>1</sup> as his Secretary of the Treasury, was requested to press upon him, in the manner most likely to be acceptable, a free gift of £100,000. But Mr. Pitt

<sup>1</sup> [See p. 51.]

answered his friend as follows: 'No consideration upon earth shall ever induce me to accept it.'

"Surely it was not without reason, nor merely from the warmth of private friendship, that we find William Grenville, at almost the same date, exclaim to his brother, 'There certainly never was in this country at any period such a situation as Mr. Pitt's.'

Fox and Sheridan, though certainly not less embarrassed in circumstances, were never exposed to the perplexity of having to refuse so tempting an offer. In proportion as the Regency debate raised the Minister in popular estimation, it lowered his opponents. They availed themselves of the opportunity to convince the nation that they were still the heroes of the half-forgotten Coalition, unchanged by reflection, untaught by experience. As they then allied themselves with Lord North, whom it had been their main Parliamentary occupation to denounce, so now, to humour the Prince, they took under their protection the very principles which they existed as a party to oppose.

As soon as the King's illness had been ascertained by an examination of the physicians, Pitt proceeded, according to the usual course in any case of constitutional difficulty, to move for a Committee to search for precedents. It was natural to expect that the motion would be unopposed. Common prudence, as well as common decency, should have suggested to Fox to observe punctiliously every formality in the process of transferring power from the Sovereign who hated him to the Regent of whose favour he was secure. But either the near prospect of the fruition of hopes so long deferred was too much for his self-control,

or an instinctive distrust of the Prince's good faith made him eager at once to secure himself in his patron's good graces by a striking display of devotion. Whichever was the motive, he refused to wait for Pitt's tedious though decorous forms. He insisted on it that there was no need for a Committee of Precedents. It was not a question of precedent. By virtue of the Constitution, by his own inherent right, the heir-apparent was entitled to assume the full regal power just as much as if the King had been dead; and it was nothing but his abundant courtesy that prevented him from acting upon all his rights the very moment that the King's incapacity was ascertained. It was the province of Parliament to ascertain that fact, but further than this Parliament had no right to interfere. Pitt listened with unconcealed triumph to this high prerogative doctrine—higher, as Grenville observed, than anything that had been heard since the days of Sir Robert Sawyer.<sup>1</sup> The Minister turned round to a friend who was sitting next him on the Treasury Bench, and whispered, "I'll *unwhig* the gentleman for the rest of his life." He amply redeemed his promise in the debates that followed; but, in truth, the great Whig leader had unwhigged himself. Since the Stuarts had disappeared, the only point of contact between the Whigs of the time of Rockingham and the Whigs of the time of Somers had been the desire to exalt Parliament above prerogative. And now their leader was exalting the inherent prerogative, not of the reigning Sovereign, but of the heir-apparent, to such a height that the interference of Parliament in a case unforeseen by the Constitution was resented as

<sup>1</sup> [1633–1692. Attorney-General to James II.]

impertinent the moment it proceeded beyond the formal duty of certifying to an uncontested fact. To make matters worse, Sheridan closed the debate by threatening the House with "the danger of provoking the Prince to assert his rights." An inconceivable storm was raised in the House by this indecent menace. William Grenville, who had sat in Parliament during all the ferocious party struggles which succeeded the fall of Lord North's administration, writes to his brother that he never remembers to have witnessed such an uproar. Two or three days afterwards, Fox, who felt he had committed a blunder, made an awkward attempt at explanation; but it was impossible to do away the impression that had been created. Spite of all the disturbing influences which the near prospect of a new reign and a change of Ministry would naturally exercise on a Parliamentary following, Pitt kept his majority together. He was able without difficulty to pass his Regency Bill through the House of Commons, though it was a measure calculated to test the fidelity of any majority to the utmost. It contained restrictions which were known to be odious to the Regent, though they did not lessen his opportunities of revenging himself. They were goading the tiger at the very moment they were opening his cage. The Regency Bill was a patriotic measure, but for party purposes it was a very unwise one. Its object was to enable the Prince to govern, without enabling him either to trouble the King's present comfort, or to fix his own policy round the King's neck in case the King should recover. Thus he was to do what he liked with the Ministry, but he was not to confer peerages or life-pensions, or to meddle with the Royal House-

hold. The fear in Pitt's mind obviously was, that, if the Regent's Ministers should discover that the King was recovering, they would attempt to repeat the manœuvre of the India Bill, and make themselves safe against future accidents by filling the House of Lords with their own creatures. The Opposition was furious at the suspicion, in proportion as they felt that it was deserved. They lost their tempers as completely, and blundered as recklessly, as they had done in the few eventful weeks that followed the fall of the Coalition. They abused Dr. Willis<sup>1</sup> because he would not give as bad a report of the King's condition as they desired; they accused the Queen of conspiring with him to keep the Prince out of his just claims, by issuing false bulletins of the King's health; and they accused her of conspiring with Pitt to retain in his hands the patronage of the Household for the purpose of controlling Parliament. Pitt's answer to the last charge was simple,—that the Household commanded just seven seats in the House of Commons: the other charges needed no answer but disdain. Burke especially distinguished himself in this saturnalia of vituperation. He nicknamed Thurlow "Priapus," and gave a caricatured description of his face in the House of Commons; he called Pitt a "competitor for the Regency" and "the Prince opposite;" and, when the division went against him, he threatened the House with the penalties of treason at the Prince's hands for the resolutions they had passed. The "wrong-headed intemperance" of which Fox's friend Lord John Townshend feelingly complained, was

<sup>1</sup> [1718–1807. Called in December, 1788, he insisted that the King should be treated more gently. He was always confident the King would recover.]

never pushed to so extravagant a length as during these Regency debates. All these exhibitions very seriously damaged the Opposition out of doors. They contrasted ill with the Minister's haughty, reserved, and manly bearing; and it happened, by a strange chance, that his high character for fidelity was enhanced by the reputation acquired by a colleague who in reality deserved it less than the meanest of the Prince's parasites. Even Lord Stanhope, from whose pen words of condemnation flow reluctantly in the most obvious cases of guilt, loses something of his gentleness when he comes to speak of Thurlow. His description of the well-known scene in the House of Lords is a good specimen of the clear and easy narrative which is the charm of this biography:—

“The Chancellor delivered himself of a temporizing speech, as though not yet fixed in his opinion. But he began to fear that he might be a loser instead of gainer by his projected act of treachery. The reports of Dr. Willis were in due course submitted to him. He might observe that day by day they expressed a confident hope of the King’s recovery. He might observe that on the 13th the Queen and the Princesses, whom the King had not seen since the 5th of the last month, were brought into his presence without danger. He seized Her Majesty’s hand, kissed it, and held it in his during the whole interview, which lasted half an hour. The little Princess Amelia, who from her infancy had been his favourite child, sat upon his lap.

“The Chancellor felt that he could temporize no longer without great risk to his own position. With the new hopes of the King’s recovery which Dr. Willis gave, he determined to take a bolder course on the next occasion in the House of Lords. That next occasion came on the 15th of December.

Then the Duke of York made a good and sensible speech (his first in Parliament), disavowing most expressly in his brother's name any claim not derived from the will of the people. The Chancellor upon this left the Woolsack and addressed the House. He began by expressing his great satisfaction that no claim of right was to be raised by the Prince of Wales. But as he next proceeded to the afflicted condition of the King, his emotion seemed to grow uncontrollable, his voice faltered, and he burst into a flood of tears. Recovering himself, he declared his fixed and unalterable resolution to stand by a Sovereign who, during a reign of twenty-seven years, had proved his sacred regard to the principles which seated his family upon the Throne. Their first duty, he said, was to preserve the rights of that Sovereign entire, so that, when God should permit him to recover, he might not find himself in a worse situation than before his illness. The Chancellor dwelt on his own feelings of grief and gratitude, and wrought himself up at last to these celebrated words: 'and when I forget my King, may my God forget me!'

"It seems scarcely possible to exaggerate the strong impression which this half-sentence made. Within the House itself the effect was not perhaps so satisfactory. Wilkes, who was standing under the Throne, eyed the Chancellor askance, and muttered, 'God forget you! He will see you d—— first!' Burke at the same moment exclaimed, with equal wit and with no profaneness, 'The best thing that can happen to you!' Pitt also was on the steps of the Throne. On Lord Thurlow's imprecation, he is said to have rushed out of the House, exclaiming several times, 'Oh, what a rascal!'

"But in the country at large the intrigues of Thurlow were not known—they were not even suspected. He was looked upon as the fearless assertor of his Sovereign's rights—as a strictly honest man, prepared, if need should be, to suffer for his

honesty ; and the impressive half-sentence which he had just pronounced fell in exactly with the current of popular feeling at the time. The words flew from mouth to mouth. They were seen far and wide in England, printed around portraits and wreaths, embossed on snuff-boxes, or embroidered on pocket-books. It can scarcely be doubted that in the Parliamentary conflict they became a valuable auxiliary on the Minister's side."

The truth was, that the intrigues of the Prince and the Prince's friends met with very little favour from the nation. All their sympathies were with the good old King and his homely virtues ; and they looked forward with little less than consternation to the advent of a reign as dissolute as that of Charles the Second. Nor were they reconciled to the prospect by the fact that the change which admitted social profligacy to the Court would admit political profligacy to the Cabinet at the same time.

The Regency was the last throw of Mr. Fox's party. They narrowly missed an overwhelming victory ; for George the Third afterwards declared that if when he recovered, he had found the Regency established, nothing should have induced him to resume the reins of power. But they did miss it ; and it was their forlorn hope. The passionate greediness with which they had rushed upon the spoil, even before it could be legally assigned to them, had marked them rather as hungry adventurers than as statesmen. The impression which the Coalition had originally left became deeper and more permanent ; and the nation centred its attachment more and more exclusively on Pitt. He never lost it up to the day of his death. It

gathered itself more passionately round him as the clouds of the French Revolution collected over Europe, and his name was associated with the cause of law and order—his rival's with the bloodiest excesses that had ever been committed in the name of liberty. Every new danger that threatened—each successive phase of that great convulsion—was a support to the Ministry, and a blow to the Opposition. The more the middle and upper classes were terrified by the spread of Jacobin doctrines, the more they clung to the Minister who put down those doctrines with a strong hand. The greater their terror of the successes of the French armies, the more resolutely they turned away from the apologist of the Revolution and the admirer of Bonaparte.

A different explanation of Pitt's success is naturally popular with Whig historians. Lord Macaulay, whose affection for Lord Holland never left him free from bias in judging of the character of Lord Holland's uncle, prefers to exalt to a preternatural height the power of eloquence in the House of Commons, and then to attribute to Pitt a pre-eminence as a debater which his most ardent admirers have seldom claimed. That Pitt can have ruled by sheer eloquence in a House where he was opposed by Fox, Burke, Sheridan, and Grey, is inconceivable. The early development of his eloquence was very remarkable; but it is never recorded to have produced the wonderful effect which is attributed to Lord Chatham's speeches. It was a quality which he, no doubt, possessed in great perfection, but which he possessed in common with many great statesmen before and since, who yet have not been able, with the help of

## PITT AND FOX CONTRASTED    III

it, to retain an undisputed ascendancy over their countrymen during two and twenty years. The phenomenon requires some more adequate explanation. The peculiarity of his position—its strange and impregnable strength—lay in the contrast between his own character and that of his opponents. There have been many statesmen with worse characters than Fox ; there may have been some as pure as Pitt. But the extremes have never been contrasted with each other as they were in that generation. There never was a time when the reputation of one rival stood so high, while that of the other stood so low. So long as the political and private characters of Fox, Sheridan, and the Prince of Wales remained as a foil to his own unimpeached purity, Pitt was unassailable. This is the true key of his unparalleled success. No doubt he could not have maintained so lastingly his sudden elevation if his high character had not been reinforced by talents equally lofty. But a nation may easily underrate ability ; it rarely misconstrues a high morality, or, for any length of time, gives honour to motives that are really base. The secret of Pitt's popularity is betrayed by the utter absence of any reaction in favour of his opponent. Before his life closed England had passed through many vicissitudes of fortune, good harvests and bad, peace and war, contentment and rebellion, victories and reverses—vicissitudes which, in other times, have constantly changed the current of public favour from one competitor for power to the other. But never during all that period, under any pressure of taxation, or in the face of any disaster, did the nation manifest the faintest ambition to be again governed by Mr. Fox. With the King the name

acted as a spell to tame the will that had never been tamed before. In Mr. Pitt's hands it was a wand of power which many of Mr. Pitt's predecessors in office would have given much to possess. The simple intimation that Mr. Pitt must retire, or, in other words, that the possibility would be opened for the return of Mr. Fox, reduced the King to pliability in a moment on any subject not bearing upon religion. Even his affection for Lord Thurlow could not stand the strain.<sup>1</sup> In fact, to the end of Mr. Pitt's life, there was but one subject outside the domain of religion in regard to which he ever found the King impracticable, and that was the restoration of any portion of political power to Fox.

Many hard names have been flung at George the Third for his refusal in 1804 to come to any terms with the Whig leader. Lord Macaulay dismisses him with the gentle epithets, "dull, obstinate, unforgiving, and half mad." But, nevertheless, it is easy to see in Lord Macaulay's own essay, and in many other quarters, that on the subject of Fox's political career the opinion of our generation is gravitating toward that of the much-reviled Monarch. The truth is, that affectionate and interested efforts have thrown an artificial halo round the fame of Mr. Fox. His personal fascinations were so powerful, that almost all who fell within the range of his influence felt bound throughout the rest of their lives to defend his

<sup>1</sup> [On the 15th of May, 1792, Thurlow's perversity and disloyalty culminated in his opposition in the House of Lords to one of Pitt's financial measures. Pitt next day informed the King that he could no longer sit in Council with the Lord Chancellor, and the King thereupon told Dundas to inform Thurlow that, however strong his (the King's) affection was for him, since it was impossible to remove Pitt, the Chancellor must go.]

## POLITICAL CANONIZATION OF FOX 113

memory against all comers. A political party who for the last thirty years have been powerful in politics and still more powerful in literature, being afflicted with a scarcity of heroes, have centred all their hero-worship on this single image. This political canonization has effected transformations in history as strange as any that were ever perpetrated by any *Acta Sanctorum*. The intrigues of a restless ambition, that never knew scruple, or worried itself about principle, have been converted into the struggles of a second Hampden against a Court conspiracy for enslaving England. The phrases struck out in the heat of debate, or selected at random as the readiest missiles to fling at an adversary's head, have been cited as the profound maxims of a political philosopher. But all this is passing away, and a truer measure is beginning to be applied to the political conduct of Mr. Fox. Later revelations have tended to cloud his fame. His sagacity turns out to have been more limited, and his patriotism more dead, than any one had believed. Lord John Russell, with sacrilegious hand, has himself done much to disfigure his idol's beauty. To use Lord Stanhope's just though guarded language—

"The familiar correspondence of Fox, as edited with ability and candour by Lord John Russell, has not tended on the whole to exalt his fame. Such, at least, is the opinion which I have heard expressed with sincere regret by some persons greatly prepossessed in his favour—some members of the families most devoted to his party cause. It seems to be felt that, although a perusal of his letters leaves in its full lustre his reputation as an orator, it has greatly dimmed his reputation as a statesman. There are, in his correspondence, some hasty things

that are by no means favourable to his public spirit, as where he speaks of the ‘delight’ which he derived from the news of our disasters at Saratoga and at York-town. There are some hasty things that are as far from favourable to his foresight and sagacity. Take, for instance, a prophecy as follows, in 1801: ‘According to my notion the House of Commons has in a great measure ceased, and will shortly entirely cease, to be a place of much importance.’ Perhaps, also, after the perusal of these letters, we may feel more strongly than before it that many parts of Fox’s public conduct—as his separation from Lord Shelburne, or his junction with Lord North—are hard to be defended.”

But the King had special ground, beyond any that his subjects could have pleaded, for entertaining a strong dislike to Mr. Fox. He felt all that they could feel against him, for he entered keenly into public affairs during the last twenty years of his government. He sided thoroughly with his Ministers, hated their foes, and loved their friends, and felt their triumphs as his own. His letters to Mr. Pitt show that he took as lively an interest in every division and debate as any party-whip could do. Consequently he felt all the indignation Mr. George Rose himself could feel at each of Fox’s discreditable manœuvres. The factiousness of 1783, the unfeeling ambition of 1788, the reckless, unpatriotic conduct of 1794,<sup>1</sup> accumulated an amount of hatred in the King’s mind which nothing but a strong necessity could have induced him to overcome. But there was another and a more personal cause of resentment never absent from his memory, which deepened in his eyes the dark hue of Mr.

<sup>1</sup> [The fight with the Coalition, the Regency Bill, and the outbreak of the French War.]

Fox's political offences. He had good grounds for attributing to Mr. Fox's advice and instigation the great affliction of his life—the scandalous habits, and, still more, the rebellious attitude of the Prince of Wales. To a certain extent this imputation was supported by the facts. To a still greater extent it was supported by appearances which there were then no means of testing, and from which the King could only have escaped by accepting an explanation of the most painful kind.

Of Mr. Fox's complicity in many of the Prince's offences there can be no doubt. Their friendship in the first instance probably arose from the Prince's discontent with the frugal fare and the rigid morality of Buckingham House on the one hand, and Mr. Fox's political calculations on the other. The King's health, like that of the Duke of Wellington and several other long-lived persons, was not reputed to be good in his middle age. The probability of his early death was eagerly reckoned, and was the subject of many a wager at Brooks's Club; and Mr. Fox early turned to the worship of the rising sun. Few people could withstand the charm of Fox's manner if he chose to undertake their subjugation; and he could offer to the Prince the additional bait of an introduction to a paradise of new pleasure, unknown within the virtuous precincts of his father's court. A friendship soon sprang up of the closest kind. The Prince used to address the statesman, in all their correspondence as "Dear Charles;" and the statesman, though using more respectful language, always spoke his mind with the most unrestrained freedom to the Prince. They lived on terms of the strictest intimacy, Fox combining in one the character of

Mentor and of Falstaff, and supplying both jolly companionship and political advice. It is presumable that the former was of better quality than the latter, or the friendship would not have lasted very long. It was cemented on both sides by mutual services. Sixty thousand pounds a year were allowed by the King to the Prince to support his petty court, a sum that ought to have been ample so long as he remained unmarried. He looked on it, however, as niggardly in the extreme, and insisted that it ought to be doubled. Fox strained every nerve to procure him this further supply of the sinews of debauchery. The effort to force it at all hazards on the King very nearly broke up the Coalition Ministry before its time; but the King knew tolerably well the purposes to which the increased allowance was destined, and stood firm. The demand naturally did not meet with more favour when Pitt was in power. Pitt was, above all things, anxious to reduce debt, and bring the finances into good order; and a hundred thousand pounds was a considerable sum in a peace expenditure which, exclusive of debt, did not exceed six millions. Foiled in this application, the Prince for some time had recourse to the simple expedient of not paying his bills, and lived at the rate of a hundred and twenty thousand a year with an income of sixty; but after a time the tradesmen became tired of this plan, and he was compelled to bethink him of another. At one time he was very much inclined to accept a large present of money from the Duke of Orleans, the notorious Egalité, who was reported to be the richest subject in Europe, and who felt a natural sympathy for the difficulties of a kindred spirit. Mr. Fox, who was

wise enough to foresee the dangers of such a step, persuaded him to abandon the idea; but he suggested in place of it a device that was even more offensive to the King. It was to put down his court, give up all his outward show, sell his horses, dismiss his Lords of the Bedchamber, and thus come before the nation to sue *informâ pauperis* for relief—to appeal to them by all the external signs of poverty against the rigour of an avaricious father. This did not mean that he was to abandon the substance of his pleasures, but only the show. Mr. Fox did not suggest to him that he should part from his mistress, or give up the Capræ of Brighton, in order to pay his debts. In fact, the nine months during which this self-denying resolution was in operation were principally spent at that ascetic residence. He was only to give up the royal state, which he had received his income expressly to maintain. Naturally this peculiar mode of showing penitence did not excite much sympathy with the public. It was nothing less than a fresh act of hostility towards the King. The wits made themselves very merry with caricatures of the revels of the "Merry Beggars" at Brighton, but neither the Prince nor his advisers increased their popularity by the manœuvre. Still less did he melt the heart of the unsympathetic Prime Minister. His friends did the best they could for him both in Parliament and out of it; but after a time he was compelled to moderate his demands, and to compromise his claim for a slight augmentation revocable at the King's pleasure.

In gratitude for these services, and generally for the honour of Fox's friendship, the Prince threw himself without limit or reserve into the arms of

Fox's party. In public that party acted in hostility to the King; in private he was the object of their unrestrained scurrility. But this peculiarity was in the Prince's eyes no bar, probably it even added a zest, to their alliance. He certainly omitted no occasion for showing that he preferred their friendship to his father's. When he was but nineteen he openly took part in the Windsor election against the Court. When the Coalition had overthrown Lord Shelburne, and the King was engaged in vainly attempting, by alternate entreaties to Pitt and North, to escape from his captors, the Prince was heard to say aloud at the Drawing-room, "that his father had not yet agreed to the plan of the Coalition, but by God he should be made to agree to it." In the same spirit he voted for the India Bill against the King's known wishes, and took a public part in the Westminster election, decked out in Fox's colours.

This unconcealed enmity, painful and scandalous as it was, the King used freely to lay to the charge of Fox. Fox vehemently denied the imputation, and declared it to be a slanderous fiction of Thurlow's. If there is anything more probable than that Fox should have been guilty of the offence, it is that Thurlow should have invented the charge; but, at any rate, it is certain that, if Fox did not engender, he at least fostered the Prince's hatred of his father, and built upon it all his hopes of political success. It is not just to vilify the King, as Lord Macaulay has done, because to the end of his life he cherished a peculiar aversion for Mr. Fox. It was no case of transient insult, or of common political hostility. Lord Macaulay asks why Grey and Erskine, who, as politicians, had been quite as

violent, were not visited with a similar proscription. The answer is that Grey and Erskine had not estranged from him his son's affection, his heir's allegiance, and had not tainted with the contagion of licentiousness the purest court in Europe.

We have dwelt a good deal upon the conduct of Mr. Pitt's opponents, because they really furnish the standard by which his public conduct ought to be judged. We should not appreciate his lofty public spirit as it deserves, except by comparing it with the self-seeking intrigues which were tolerated and practised by the statesmen among whose ranks he enrolled himself on his first entry into public life. We might look upon his prudence and foresight as matters of course, if they were not contrasted with the blind and greedy recklessness of those who, if he had fallen, must have occupied his place. Of his administration so long as England remained at peace—and no man laboured more hard to keep her at peace than he did—there is not much to say. Like all prosperous histories, its evenness makes it uneventful. There is no difference of opinion among modern writers upon the skill with which the disordered finances were repaired, the disaffection pacified, which when he acceded to office was widely spreading, and the failing trade of the country stimulated. Under his wise and humane administration the English became both a wealthier and a more contented people: but this only lasted so long as the country remained at peace. When the French Convention forced England into war, there was a grievous change. Heavy taxes were laid on, harsh laws enacted, severe punishments inflicted. The era of prosperity was succeeded by a period of suffering

and consequent discontent, and the discontent was repressed with an iron hand. This sinister change has with great injustice been laid to the charge of Pitt. It would be easy to show that the sacrifices both of resources and of liberty which England was undoubtedly forced to make, were only the sacrifices to which every country must be exposed which has an aggressive neighbour in a condition of frantic anarchy. But we have hardly left ourselves space to do justice to this subject. We shall be better able to treat it worthily, if we reserve it till the publication of Lord Stanhope's concluding volumes enables us to examine into Pitt's foreign and domestic policy as a whole during all that part of the revolutionary period which he lived to witness. It has been too fiercely criticised to be despatched within such limits as we can now afford to it.

But with respect to the excellence of his policy during the years of peace, there has been very little controversy in recent times. The only quarrel has been as to which political party has the right to appropriate his merits. For many years it was an historical axiom that Pitt was a Tory. He was regarded as the ideal of Tory ministers—the pattern of vigorous government and anti-revolutionary principles; and for some time accordingly Whig writers, with proper party spirit, abused his measures and depreciated his fame. As partisanship cooled, however, they were compelled to recognize his merits; but they indemnified themselves by the discovery that he was not a Tory, but a Whig. The controversy is rather a difficult one to decide, from the want of a definition of the principal terms employed. There is no doubt, on the one

hand, that when he entered Parliament he took his place among the Rockingham Whigs ; and it is equally certain that he was a Reformer, a Catholic Emancipator, and to some extent a Freetrader. On the other hand, he was opposed from the beginning to the end by Fox and Grey, who are enshrined in the foremost niches of the Whig Pantheon ; and his political pupils were Castlereagh and Canning, who were certainly supposed by their contemporaries to be Tories. Lord Macaulay lays down that Pitt was an enlightened Whig. Before we can say aye or no to that proposition we must ascertain what are the specific qualities which in all times and places distinguish a Whig from every other breed of politician. It is needless to say that no such differentia can be found. No principle cherished by the Whigs of any one generation can be named, which the Whigs of some other generation have not repudiated. Nor is this change of watchwords peculiar to the Whigs. The historical continuity of parties has a political as well as a sentimental value ; but it is an absolute delusion if it is applied to measure the tendencies of a statesman in one age by the tendencies of another statesman in another age. It will only mislead if it is used to give a character of permanence to that which is in its nature fleeting. The axioms of the last age are the fallacies of the present ; the principles which save one generation may be the ruin of the next. There is nothing abiding in political science but the necessity of truth, purity, and justice. The evils by which the body politic is threatened are in a state of constant change, and with them the remedies by which those evils must be cured. Such changes operate very rapidly in these days. The concessions that

were salutary yesterday may be doubtful to-day, and infatuated weaknesses to-morrow. To insist that those who revere a great statesman's memory shall carry out, aye, and exaggerate, the policy which in his lifetime he thought prudent, is to forget that we live in an ever-changing scene. To measure Pitt by modern party-gauges, to try to accommodate his views to any "platform" of the present day, is a folly no other in kind, and only less in degree, than that of those historians who have written the history of Greece and Rome from the "stand-point" of Reformers of 1832.

The truth is that Pitt will always be a perplexity to those who love to classify the politics of bygone statesmen. He was far too practical a politician to be given to abstract theories, universal doctrines, watchwards, or shibboleths of any kind. He knew of no political gospel that was to be preached in season and out of season alike. When he thought reform wholesome, he proposed it; when he ceased to think it wholesome, he ceased to propose it. Whether his memory would be claimed by Reformers or anti-Reformers was a question upon which he troubled himself very little. In the same way he urged Catholic Emancipation, even at the cost of power, when he judged that the balance of advantages was on its side. He abandoned it with equal readiness as soon as the King's strong resistance and the necessity of avoiding intestine division in the face of foreign peril had placed the balance of advantage on the other side. The same untheoretic mind may be traced in all his legislation. The great merit of his measures, so far as they had a trial, was that they were admirably calculated to attain the object they had in view,

with the least possible damage to the interests which any great change must necessarily affect. Their demerit was, if demerit it be, that they were justifiable on no single theory, and were often marred by what seemed to be logical contradictions, which damaged them in argument, though they did not hinder them in practice. The result was that they were difficult to pass, and that he often seemed to conceal by his dexterity as a debater the essential unsoundness of his doctrines. But when they were fairly passed they worked very well. Or if he did not succeed in passing them, the miscarriage of later adventurers in the same region enables us to see that they failed precisely in proportion as they disregarded the beacons which he had laid down. His India Bill<sup>1</sup> was one of the happiest instances of this sort of prosaic sagacity. Fox's Bill, setting aside the atrocious partanship which marked the nomination of the Commissionerships, was simple and systematic. Complete concentration of power and patronage in a single office, complete independence of the changing caprices of the Crown and the House of Commons, checked by a periodical liability to Parliamentary supervision, combined to make a theorist's perfect structure. But the storm of hostility with which its appearance was greeted sufficiently foretold the fatal resistance it would have practically met with when it came into operation, if Lord Temple's

<sup>1</sup> [Fox's Bill transferred to a Board of seven persons—named in Committee—the whole patronage and government of India. They were to account to Parliament at the beginning of every Session. By Pitt's Bill the patronage was practically left untouched, and the administration was divided between the Directors of the Company and the new President and Board of Control.]

manceuvre had not tripped it up in the House of Lords. Pitt's Bill was in all points the very reverse. It was a double Government ; and double Governments are generally found to be weak. It professed to correct the misgovernment of the East India Company ; and yet it left all the details of administration into which misgovernment mostly finds its way at their disposal. It professed to leave inviolate the privileges of the East India Company ; and yet in some of the most momentous questions of policy it superseded the Company altogether. Its whole motive power was the highly artificial contrivance, we may say the fiction, of the Secret Committee ; not a fiction that had sprung up in the lapse of ages from the decay of old powers and the growth of new, but one which was freshly and elaborately constructed by an Act of Parliament. Yet the system which he projected succeeded beyond all hope. It conducted the Government of India with glory and success through many a conquest and many a civilizing reform for more than half a century. Its complicated structure made it, no doubt, slow and cumbrous ; but the secret of its success was that it worked absolutely without friction. At the cost of logical simplicity it conciliated all interests and disarmed all jealousies.

The same practical good sense, and the same contempt for the reproach of anomaly, were displayed, though on a smaller scale, in the famous Regency Bill.<sup>1</sup> The difficulty was an exceptional

<sup>1</sup> [The Queen was to have the care of the King and the direction and appointment of the Household ; the Prince was to be Regent, but to grant no Peerages except to his brothers ; nor any property ; nor any office or pension for any term other than the King's pleasure except such offices as could by law only be granted for life or during good behaviour.]

one, and required an exceptional remedy. It lay in the youth, thoughtlessness, and friendships of the Prince of Wales. It was almost a matter of certainty, from the bearing he and his advisers had adopted, that if he had acceded to the royal power in January, 1789, he would have reversed the whole of his father's policy, flooded the House of Peers with his own creatures, and distributed life offices and pensions among them with no sparing hand; so that when his father resumed the reins two months afterwards he would have returned to power with an overburdened Civil List and an intractable House of Lords. On the other hand, no one who wished well to the empire could have wished to intrust its affairs in a critical time to a Council of Regency. Pitt took a course between the two, giving to the Prince only a limited portion of the regal power, but allowing him to exercise that portion without restraint. It was the only course which was practically safe; and so it was judged to be by the nation, which throughout the debates supported Pitt with enthusiasm. But it was equally evident that he was creating an officer unknown to the British Constitution—a sort of half-king, with all a king's irresponsibility and rank, but only half a king's power. A less self-reliant man than Pitt, or one more under the dominion of theory, would have shrunk from the anomaly of such a step, and still more from the difficulty of defending it in debate.

The same peculiar tact in dealing with the feelings and prejudices of those on whom his measures were to operate might be traced, if our remaining space permitted us to do it, in most of the beneficial legislation by which the peaceful half of his administration was distinguished. Within

the limits of the great principles of the Constitution, he always preferred to sacrifice any amount of theory rather than make for his proposals a single needless enemy. But perhaps it was in the measures which he was not allowed to pass that this tendency was most strikingly displayed. In his Reform Bill,<sup>1</sup> and his proposals for Catholic relief, many of his admirers have even thought that he went too far in this direction. But still this very excess shows how deeply rooted in his mind was that tenderness for minorities which Montalembert has eulogized as the salvation of our constitutional system. It seems an obvious political truism that a great change, however right in itself, is much less likely to be carried out successfully if a large number of persons are left whose prejudices incite them to hamper it. There was no truth of which Pitt was more convinced.

In respect to the question of Catholic relief<sup>2</sup> there were difficulties on both sides. Mr. Pitt, as is well known, proposed to adopt some measure for the payment of the Irish priesthood, at the same moment that he admitted their nominees to sit in Parliament. Undoubtedly he saw the real danger of Emancipation. It was a proposal in effect to admit to the councils of the nation those who

<sup>1</sup> [He proposed to form a fund of £1,000,000, to buy up 36 of the most decayed boroughs and give the 72 members to the large counties and cities of Westminster and London. As other boroughs decayed the same process was to be repeated. The freehold franchise was at the same time to be extended to copy-holders.]

<sup>2</sup> [The leading proposals of Pitt's Catholic policy were the abolition of the Sacramental test, the commutation of Tithes in both countries, and a provision for the Irish Roman Catholic clergy and dissenting ministers.]

thought, spoke, and acted as the subjects of a foreign and distant Prince. Such a description was said in that day to be a slander; but we in our own day know by bitter experience that it is true. Mr. Pitt foresaw and wished to avert the dangers of "independent opposition." He judged that the concession must be made; but he wished to strip it of its terrors, by converting those who were to have the nomination to so many seats in Parliament from subjects of the Pope into subjects of the King. And he wisely conceived that the shortest and simplest plan for effecting that object was a grant from the English Treasury. But the problem was in truth insoluble. To frame an acceptable solution of this great and perplexing difficulty was in the nature of things impracticable. Everything that would have converted the Irish into loyal subjects would have alienated the religious feelings of the English. Matters had come to that pass, that it was a choice on which side of the water there should be disloyalty. The cure of the chronic discontent had become hopeless, because whatever was an emollient to one country was an irritant to the other. Among the Irish Roman Catholics themselves, as we learn from the Diaries and Correspondence of Lord Colchester<sup>1</sup>—a publication to which, as relating chiefly to a later period than that with which we are now dealing, we do not here allot the notice to which its importance entitles it—the state of feeling very soon after became such that no such Treasury grant would have been accepted.

Of Pitt's character, not as a statesman but as a man, these volumes will leave a very pleasant

<sup>1</sup> 3 vols. 8vo. London, 1860.

impression. It has been too much the fashion to regard him either as a blue-book on two legs, in whom facts and figures had smothered all human passion, or else as a joyless, loveless misanthrope, the incarnation of pure and unmixed ambition. It is impossible that any one can retain either of these impressions on rising from a perusal of Lord Stanhope's volumes. Wilberforce's diary, and the letters which Lord Stanhope prints for the first time, show that there was nothing approaching to sullenness in his disposition. There is not a black thought or moody word in them from the first to the last. He was tried, spite of his success, by severe disappointments both at home and abroad. The Opposition harassed him with an unscrupulousness of tactics, of which even we, who have seen some brilliant displays in that style, cannot form an idea; and his colleague Thurlow treated him with a mixture of insolence and perfidy compared to which open opposition was a luxury. Most of the darling schemes of his life were foiled by the anarchy of Ireland and France. And, to make all annoyances worse, the gout appears from his letters to have been a very frequent visitor. And yet not a word approaching to impatience ever appears in any one of them. The tone which prevails throughout them is that of a cheerful, contented, quiet man, with whom the world is going evenly. In point of manner their most striking feature is their extreme equanimity. There is no trace of depression at his first defeat at Cambridge, or of anger at the intrigue which drove him and Lord Shelburne out of office after the peace. There is no trace of exultation at the marvellous success of his early speeches, or at his own unparalleled popularity in 1784. He

announces his victories over the Coalition in the same unimpassioned tone in which he announces that he has been to the Duchess of Bolton's. There are none of those professions of indifference to good or evil fortune which belie themselves ; there is no word indicating the existence of any feeling on the subjects of which he writes, except that of a calm complacency. When his letters appear, as they occasionally do, by the side of letters from some one of the colleagues who were standing by him in the fight, the contrast shows how wide an interval there was between Pitt's instinctive calmness and the self-control of ordinary men. His reliance appears to have been the result of no conscious effort. He rather writes as if he had the habit of regarding language as an unsuitable vehicle for the communication of feelings, and would have recoiled from any allusion to them as an impertinence. Even when he is forced to speak of them, as on the occasion of the death of his younger brother, he does so in a stiff and laboured style which shows how much the effort cost him. His grief appears to have been very sincere ; but the language in which he expresses it reads as if it were taken from the "Complete Letter-Writer."

His manners have been censured as "stiff, retired, reserved, and sullen." The accusation has been sufficiently refuted by Lord Wellesley, who spoke from close and intimate acquaintance in a letter addressed to the late Mr. Croker in 1836 (No. 114) :—

" His manners were perfectly plain, without any affectation, but he seemed utterly unconscious of his own superiority, and much more disposed to listen than to talk. He never betrayed any symptom of

anxiety to usurp the lead or to display his own powers, but rather inclined to draw forth others, and to take merely an equal share in the general conversation: then, he plunged heedlessly into the mirth of the hour with no other care than to promote the general good humour and happiness of the company. . . . He was endowed beyond any man of the time whom I knew with a gay heart and a social spirit."

The volumes before us contain abundance of similar testimonials. The club at Goostree's, of which he was the life and soul, certainly do not seem to have thought him sullen; and when Wilberforce picked up the fragments of his opera-hat out of the flower-garden at Wimbledon, he probably did not complain of Pitt's manner as being too reserved. Nor was this gaiety the mere ebullition of youthful spirits. Nineteen years of office did not wear it away. "Nothing," says Lord Fitzharris,<sup>1</sup> writing in 1806, "could be more playful than Pitt's conversation. His style and manner were quite those of an accomplished idler." Equally unfounded is the charge that his heart was unaffectionate or cold. His tender affection for his nieces, the earnest and thoughtful regard for his mother, which his letters constantly breathe, his deep attachment to his home, and interest in all that concerned it,—all negative the absurd assertion that "he had no domestic joys," and that he was a mere official machine unencumbered with a heart. Some of the greatest mistakes he committed were

<sup>1</sup> [1778–1841. Son of the first Earl of Malmesbury, he sat in Parliament almost continuously from 1802 to 1820 when he succeeded his father. He held several small places under Government.]

the mistakes of affection. His feelings misled him into making two appointments, which were not only the worst that he ever made, but almost the worst which it was possible for him to make—and those were the appointment of his brother, Lord Chatham,<sup>1</sup> to the Admiralty, and the appointment of his tutor, Dr. Pettyman,<sup>2</sup> to a bishopric. Almost the only letter in which he departs for a moment from his habitual calmness is that in which he implores Secretary Dundas not to leave the Ministry on account of the arrogant encroachments of the Duke of Portland, who had just joined it.<sup>3</sup> The only occasion on which his self-possession deserted him in the House of Commons was when his old friend, Lord Melville, was condemned by the House for culpable laxity in his dealing with the public money :—

"I have ever thought," says Lord Fitzharris, "that an aiding cause in Pitt's death, certainly one that tended to shorten his existence, was the result of the proceedings against his old friend and colleague Lord Melville. I sat wedged close to

<sup>1</sup> [1756–1835. First Lord of the Admiralty 1788–1794, in which office he was accused of laziness and incompetence. As a soldier he is chiefly remembered for his disastrous failure as commander of the Walcheren Expedition in 1809.]

<sup>2</sup> [1750–1827. Pitt's tutor in 1774, and his private secretary 1783–87, when he became Bishop of Lincoln and Dean of St. Paul's. He took the name of Tomline for a large estate in 1803. Pitt failed to get him made Archbishop in 1804.]

<sup>3</sup> [When Portland joined Pitt in 1794 he was made Secretary of State along with Dundas, and claimed all the latter's patronage and power, leaving him nothing but the conduct of the war. Dundas thereupon offered to resign, and Pitt, in pressing him not to, said he should "be really completely heart-broken" if he adhered to his resolution.]

Pitt himself, the night when we were 216 to 216; and the Speaker, Abbot, after looking as white as a sheet, and pausing for ten minutes, gave the casting vote against us. Pitt immediately put on the little cocked hat that he was in the habit of wearing when dressed for the evening, and jammed it deeply over his forehead, and I distinctly saw the tears trickling down his cheeks. We had overheard one or two, such as Colonel Wardle (of notorious memory), say they would see 'how Billy looked after it.' A few young ardent followers of Pitt, with myself, locked their arms together, and formed a circle, in which he moved, I believe unconsciously, out of the House; and neither the Colonel nor his friends could approach him."—*Lord Fitzharris's Note Book, 1805.*

These are lighter traits. It is no slight testimony to the matchless purity of his public character, that he has to be defended on questions such as these. If his eager detractors could have hunted out any other flaw, they would not have busied themselves with the graces of his manner, or the temperature of his emotions. It is not on issues so trifling that posterity will try the greatness of "the pilot that weathered the storm." The lapse of years only brings out in brighter lustre the grandeur of his intellect and the loftiness of his character. In the combined gentleness and firmness of his administration he was a typical English statesman. No man was ever so yielding without being weak, or so stern without being obstinate. In ordinary times he followed after peace more anxiously than Walpole, and often offended his friends by his willingness to compromise and concede. When revolutionary passions had made gentleness impossible, he could be as rigorous as Strafford or as

Cromwell. As a legislator, the experience of years has tended more and more to confirm his wisdom. Most of the evils under which we suffer are evils of which he warned us; and where we have averted or softened them, it has been by remedies of his devising. The policy, both at home and abroad, in commerce and in government, which all parties now by common consent pursue, follows very closely the maxims which he laid down. He was the first Parliamentary statesman, unless an exception be made in favour of his father, who represented not a section, but the whole of England—monarchical, aristocratic, agricultural, commercial. The King justly prized him, as his wisest and truest champion. The aristocracy, after he had overthrown the clique which had domineered over them for so long, rallied gradually round his standard. The country gentlemen long toasted him as the impersonation of loyal and patriotic statesmanship, and the commercial classes clung to him as their special protector. England may well cherish his fame, and look upon his greatness with an interest which no other single image in modern political history can claim. She owes it to him that she was rescued from the deep degradation into which corruption and imbecility had plunged her. She owes to him the policy which, planned and commenced by him, and perfected by his disciples, placed her on a pinnacle of greatness which no modern nation had attained before. But she owes to him a greater benefit than all these—an example of pure and self-denying patriotism, and the elevation of public feeling which it has worked. If corruption has been driven from our politics altogether,—if faction is being daily more

**134 STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT:—I**

discredited,—if our public men, even the worst of them, are more patriotic in their conduct than the statesmen of the Coalition,—these results are in no small degree due to the spectacle with which Pitt's long career familiarized the nation's eyes, of stainless purity and lofty forgetfulness of self.

## STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT:—II

A SHORT time ago we had occasion to review the two first volumes of this biography, and to commend their merits to our readers' notice. The two new volumes will not be found to fall behind their predecessors either in charm of style or in sterling value. Indeed, their interest is greater, in that they have the advantage of dealing with a much more attractive period, and of dealing with it for the first time—since even the feeble and flickering light of Bishop Tomline's biography has not been thrown over the history of Pitt's later years. There is nothing, it is true, in our Parliamentary history that can equal in interest the strange vicissitudes of the stormy contest in the midst of which Pitt rose to power. But after this opening, the first half of his career is monotonous and tame. It required no small literary art to throw any charm over the tedious prosperity of the years that intervened between the American and the Revolutionary wars. But the period with which the volumes before us deal offers no such difficulty. The biographer is embarrassed with the press of interesting matter, and is obliged rather to guard himself from allowing the eventful history of the time to oust his hero from the prominence which

belongs to him. And we should assign to these two volumes the superiority in value as well as in interest. It appears that Lord Stanhope owes to the kindness of Mr. William Dacres Adams, Pitt's private secretary, who still survives, the communication of many interesting particulars and important manuscripts. The documents, therefore, which he prints for the first time are numerous and valuable; perhaps more so, on the whole, than those which were contained in the two first volumes. The domestic element in the series of letters is naturally weaker. The Minister's life becomes more wholly identified with the history of his time, and his friends become more purely political. The correspondence with his mother almost entirely disappears. But, on the other hand, the Melville papers, and the correspondence with the King, yield documents of great historical value. The only episode—if we except the tragical death-scene—that is not of a public character, is the brief history of his short-lived, soon-conquered attachment to Eleanor Eden,<sup>1</sup> in 1796. The ground upon which he suppressed his avowed affection seems a strange one in a Prime Minister, who was also the possessor of the then lucrative sinecure of the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports. In a letter to her father, he apologizes for the necessity of discontinuing his visits by expressing his regret that his circumstances do not permit him to presume to make her an offer of marriage. Lord Auckland would seem not to have been able to remove the obstacles to their union. So notorious were his embarrassments, and so overwhelming had they already become!

<sup>1</sup> [Born 1777. Eldest daughter of Lord Auckland. She afterwards married Lord Buckinghamshire. She died in 1851.]

But it is very seldom that, even for so brief an interval as this, Pitt's biographer can travel out of the beaten political track. His life and his public career are almost coincident. The Parliamentary portion of his public life, which occupied almost the whole narrative in the two previous volumes, falls naturally into the background in these, especially at first. From the moment of the junction between the Government and the old Whigs<sup>1</sup> to the year 1801, the course of Parliament was unvaried and uneventful. The ascendancy of the Minister was undisputed; the Opposition was entirely powerless and almost silenced; and Parliament met for little else than to register the Minister's decrees. It is not till the Catholic Question arises to disturb the even tenor of his domination, that Parliamentary history acquires its usual interest, and the animation of party government is restored. So far as regards the latter half of Pitt's career, the interest of home politics centres almost exclusively upon the net-work of difficulties which arose out of the political necessity of Catholic Relief and the King's conscientious aversion to it.

Lord Stanhope has devoted a great deal of research to the strange complication of political manœuvres which caused the interregnum of Addington, and so seriously hampered Pitt's closing days. The changes which in that brief time passed over the political scene are very curious. In the beginning of 1801 Lord Grenville was Pitt's attached colleague; Mr. Addington was Speaker, by his nomination; Mr. Fox was in bitter opposition both to Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt. In the spring of

<sup>1</sup> [After more than two years of hesitation the Portland Whigs finally joined Pitt's Government in July, 1794.]

1804, Pitt, Fox, and Grenville were fighting side by side for the purpose of displacing Addington. In the autumn of 1806, Grenville, Fox, and Addington were fighting side by side against Pitt. And yet all this time there was no definite question of domestic, and scarcely of foreign, policy at issue; and Fox, the only man among the four who can be fairly charged with want of principle, was the only man among the four whose course, for this interval at least, was thoroughly consistent.

Lord Stanhope certainly succeeds in removing from Pitt much of the blame that has been cast upon him. The difficulty under which Pitt laboured both in 1801 and 1804 was a difficulty which must be of perpetual occurrence in every constitutional State—the difficulty of marking the exact point at which the responsibility of the Sovereign ceases, and the responsibility of the Minister begins. In Governments where the theory of responsibility has been worked out with greater care, and the attributes of each particular officer are more sharply defined, this difficulty never can arise. Mr. Seward<sup>1</sup> carries out President Lincoln's views, and is not held to have disgraced himself if those views differ from his own. M. Walewski and M. de Persigny<sup>2</sup> must have been made a score of times the instruments of a policy in which they could not coincide; but no one thinks the worse of them on that account.

<sup>1</sup> [1801–1872. Secretary of State under President Lincoln 1861–65.]

<sup>2</sup> [Walewski (1810–1868), said to have been a natural son of Napoleon I. by a Polish lady. After being Ambassador in London, in 1854 he became Foreign Minister, and remained in high office till 1867. Persigny (1808–1872), always a close associate of Napoleon III., was Minister of the Interior in 1851. Ambassador in London in 1854–60, and Minister again in 1860–63.]

It is a well-understood fact that the Emperor in the one case, and the President in the other, bear the sole responsibility of the acts which are done in their name. But in England the case is very different. We have eased the descent from a monarchy that once was absolute to the indefinable balance of power under which we at present live, by the convenient help of constitutional fictions. Our theory, as it stands, is that the Sovereign exerts all the power of the executive, while his Minister bears all the responsibility. Of course, in its literal sense this never has been true, and never can be. No honourable man, scarcely any sane man, would accept the responsibility of all that another might think fit, without consulting him, to do. Ministers have always insisted, as a condition of their retaining office, that in the main the policy of the Sovereign shall be guided by their advice. But no Minister has ever yet succeeded in pushing this claim so far as to reduce the Sovereign to a mere cypher. Notorious cases have more than once arisen—and doubtless there have been many more which have never come to light—in which the Sovereign has, as it were, turned to bay, and has adhered to his refusal to adopt some distasteful course in spite of the Minister's threats of resignation. "I had rather go back to Germany," was the common form in which Sovereigns of the House of Hanover were wont to announce to their Ministers that the limits of pliability had been reached. It is difficult when matters have come to this pass, to say what a constitutional Minister ought to do. On the one hand, it seems hard to say that he is to remain in office, to bear the responsibility of a policy that is not his own, and to endure the reproaches of his enemies,

perhaps of his former friends, for sacrificing his principles and pledges to the fascinations of place and power. On the other hand, his resignation may involve the most serious dangers. The condition of the House of Commons, or of the Sovereign or the state of affairs at home or abroad, may be such, that his continuance in office is the only mode of averting evils which may threaten the deepest interests, perhaps the very existence of the realm. Either alternative seems equally intolerable. Every Minister will decide the question more in accordance with his own feelings than in deference to any fixed rule of action. But the insoluble difficulties of the problem ought to be a bar to the condemnation of bystanders or historians. One Minister may elect to be true to his pledges: another may elect to break them for his country's sake. But it is impossible to say with justice that one is more culpable than the other.

It is obvious that such difficulties must arise. Keen constitutionalists seem to have assumed that in all cases the King, somehow or other, must be made to give way. But Sovereigns are men, and have scruples and strong convictions like other men. For the sake of the public weal they renounce the freedom of speech and action which the meanest of their subjects enjoy. They bow their necks silently to a yoke which must often be galling to men of warm feelings and active minds. It is happy for England that, since the Revolution, her Sovereigns have been almost uniformly willing to offer what must frequently have been felt as a humiliating submission to views and wishes the most repugnant to their own. It would have scarcely been possible, considering the gravity of

the subject-matters that have often been in issue, antecedently to have calculated on so uniform a facility of disposition. But it would have been madness to expect that such a complaisance should be absolutely without limit. There are subjects upon which no man of common spirit or common conscience can tolerate to be made the tool of opinions not his own. There are compliances that leave behind them a remorse and a self-contempt for which ten times the greatness of an English Sovereign would be a miserable repayment. Such a subject was Catholic Emancipation. It would be idle labour to blow up again the embers of a controversy that is thoroughly forgotten. It is a subject on which there is no difference of opinion now. All are agreed that it was no breach of the Coronation Oath, and that whatever evil fruits it has in practice borne, far greater evils would have resulted from its being withheld. But, in the year 1800, the mass of English opinion was the other way. Enlightened men, like Mr. Pitt, and Lord Castlereagh, and Mr. Canning, who saw beyond their age, recognized the fact that it must be granted, and that it would be granted under worse conditions if the grievance should be made the subject of systematic agitation. But neither the mass of the members of the Established Church, nor the majority of the two Houses, shared this view; and the King, who, though shrewd, was not far-seeing, held it in especial detestation. He had conceived the idea that it was a breach of his Coronation Oath. Such an interpretation of the Coronation Oath, though probably contrary to the intention of those who framed it, was far from being untenable. Ancient oaths, framed with a regard to

circumstances that have ceased to operate, are apt to ensnare tender consciences by their ambiguity. But whether the King was right or wrong in the interpretation of his oath, there is no doubt that he held it very sincerely, and that he was confirmed in it by the two highest authorities to whom he could appeal. Both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor took the strong Protestant view of the question. Whether Lord Loughborough's convictions on this point were purely disinterested, it is not worth while to discuss. The more his character and career are examined by successive historians, the more pitifully they show. But he contrived thoroughly to inoculate the King's mind with the scruples which he only simulated himself. The letters which passed between the King and Mr. Pitt, some of which are printed by Lord Stanhope for the first time, leave no doubt upon the reader's mind of the entire sincerity of the King's convictions, and of the pain it caused him to carry them out. The style in which they are written is slovenly to the last degree; but the very haste and carelessness of their composition is in some sense an evidence that they were a faithful and unvarnished picture of his thoughts. The language which he is recorded to have held in conversation about this time is equally decisive of his sincerity :—

“ Under such circumstances, and as if to tranquillize his mind, he reverted again and again to the religious obligation which he conceived to bind him. One morning—so his faithful equerry General Garth many years afterwards related—he desired his Coronation Oath to be once more read out to him, and then burst forth into some passionate

exclamations: ‘Where is that power on earth to absolve me from the due observance of every sentence of that oath? . . . No—I had rather beg my bread from door to door throughout Europe than consent to any such measure! ’

“Another day, at Windsor—this was on the 6th or 7th of the month—the King read his Coronation Oath to his family, asked them whether they understood it, and added, ‘If I violate it, I am no longer legal Sovereign of this country, but it falls to the House of Savoy.’

“In the middle of February the King fell ill. His illness was at first no more than a feverish cold. On the 17th he saw Mr. Addington, and on the 18th he saw the Duke of Portland. With the latter he talked very calmly on the general aspect of State affairs. ‘For myself,’ said His Majesty, ‘I am an old Whig; and I consider those statesmen who made barrier-treaties and conducted the ten last years of the Succession War the ablest we ever had.’ The Duke only noticed as unusual that the King spoke in a loud tone of voice. But it is remarkable in this conversation that George the Third discerned what since his time has become much more apparent, how, not by any sudden change, but by the gradual progress of events, the Whig party has drifted away from its first position in the reign of Queen Anne, and come round to occupy the original ground of its opponents.” (Vol. iii. pp. 292, 293.)

It was inevitable that with such feelings he should have refused to entertain the propositions upon which Mr. Pitt and his Cabinet had agreed. As soon as his resolution was intimated to the Minister, the latter appears to have recognized the hopelessness of struggling against it, and resigned without even demanding a personal interview. The suddenness with which this step was taken at a moment when his power in Parliament was more

unquestioned than ever, caused much surprise and some suspicion. The suspicion was without ground. The rumours which were current at the time to the effect that the Catholic claims had only afforded a colourable pretext for escaping from the humiliation of making a peace which had become inevitable, have been laid aside by general consent. The documents which have been published in later times sufficiently dispose of the malignant insinuations with which Lord Auckland<sup>1</sup> took occasion to repay the favour of his early patron. At least, if Pitt ever entertained any such idea, he never breathed it to any human being. Nor were the colleagues who acted with him the most cordially upon this question, Lord Grenville and Lord Spencer, either conscious of any such manœuvre, or aware of any point in his conduct which would suggest the need of such an explanation. Fox's "juggle,"<sup>2</sup> and Lord Auckland's "mystery," were figments of their own distempered minds. With the exception of Lord Brougham, no modern authority of importance has adopted them. In truth the grounds of Pitt's conduct were so obvious that the mystery is rather that any party spirit can have mistaken them. Without passing an actual pledge, he had allowed it to be intimated to the

<sup>1</sup> [William Eden, economist and diplomat, was born 1744, and died 1814. He was a close friend of Pitt, who made him a peer in 1793. The reference in the text is to a speech made by Auckland on March 20, 1801, suggesting there must be some hidden and discreditable motive for Pitt's resignation. The speech seems to have been the result of pique at not having been taken into Pitt's confidence. (See "Auckland Correspondence," vol. iv. p. 195.)]

<sup>2</sup> [Fox, in writing to his nephew, Lord Holland, on Feb. 8, 1801, treats Pitt's resignation as a notorious juggle in order to coerce the King. (Fox's "Memorials," vol. iii. p. 188.)]

Catholics of Ireland that the Ministry was favourable to them, and that it would be in a much better position for considering their claims when the Union with England had become law. On the strength of these assurances, which probably did not lose either in force or precision in the hands of the inferior agents of the Government, the Catholics gave the project their support. It is very clear that, opposed as it was both by the secret treason of some and the unconcealed self-interest of many, it never could have been carried if the Catholics had opposed it. Pitt felt himself bound to pay a fair price for value received. He did not think himself at liberty, after he had gained his object, to repudiate the understanding on which the votes that gained it were given. And when he found in the King's persistency an unexpected and insuperable obstacle, his only mode of fixing the responsibility where it really lay was to resign. A contrary view of political morality has been so often sanctioned within the last thirty years by distinguished statesmen of all parties, that Pitt's scruples upon the subject of breaking implied promises may appear Quixotic. But no one who applies to public affairs the morality of private life, will doubt that Pitt was in the right.

It by no means follows that the King was in the wrong. Of the two, his grounds of action were the strongest: for while Pitt was only fulfilling an implied engagement, the King was keeping what he believed to be a solemn oath. Such has not, however, been the judgment which it has been fashionable with Liberal historians and critics to pronounce. In fact, their principal motive for sparing Pitt in respect to this transaction, appears to have been

that they might be better able to turn the full force of their animosity upon the King. Fox's opinion of the scruple entertained by the King was, that "the mention of the Coronation Oath was one of the most impudent and disgusting pieces of hypocrisy he had seen."<sup>1</sup> If he judged of the King's esteem for his oath by the esteem which he himself had shown in 1783 for his own most solemn asseverations, he could not well come to any other conclusion. If at any time of his life he had professed to take an important political step, out of a regard for his own previous promises, the proceeding would have been most justly designated by the vigorous epithets we have quoted. The fury with which his later followers have attacked the King's persistency on this occasion is less intelligible. One would have thought that that persistency was exacted by the most rudimentary principles of honour. His view of the bearing of his Coronation Oath might have been erroneous; but it was the belief of many persons far more gifted and far more cultivated than himself. It implies neither intellectual nor moral obliquity to entertain a belief which is the popular persuasion of the age. And, assuming that it really was his belief, it was not only natural that he should have acted up to it, but he would have been the most contemptible of men if he had disregarded it. For the sake of a worldly interest of no very pressing kind, he would have perjured himself of an oath sworn to in the most solemn manner, and relating to the most sacred subject. Not only no wise king, but no man who was fit to associate with gentlemen, would have done that which some writers inveigh against George III. for having refused.

<sup>1</sup> Fox's "Mem. and Corr., " iii. 153.

The "Constitutional duties" of an English King are a matter of prudence, not of special obligation; but, even if they had been imposed by law instead of by a vague and shifting custom, they could not have bound him to a perjury. Nor did the importance of the question in any way affect his duty. As it happened, his decision, though of great, was not of vital moment. It embarrassed the subsequent settlement of the Roman Catholic claims; but it produced at the time no consequences of importance. But, if it had been as momentous as it was trivial in its immediate results, it would have been far better for the fair fame of George III. in the eyes of posterity—to speak of no higher tribunal—that he should have forfeited his crown or his life in resisting Catholic claims, than that he should for expediency's sake have yielded what in his own belief he had sworn to refuse. And yet, if he had consciously forsworn himself, he would have been judged more kindly by many at least of his critics. It is a sad comment on the morality by which historians try the actions of great men, that Henry IV.'s abandonment of Protestantism, or Charles I.'s abandonment of Episcopacy, to serve the purpose of the moment, have not been visited with one tenth part of the invective that has followed George III.'s honest, though blind veneration for his oath.

Though Pitt had rightly estimated the strength of the King's determination, he had not anticipated the depth of the King's attachment to himself. The struggle of parting with him for conscience' sake was too severe for a mind already shaken by insanity. Before the new Ministers could be installed, the old symptoms of 1778 returned. The attack was quite as severe; fortunately it was not

quite as obstinate. Addington's happy suggestion of the hop-pillow—which Lord Stanhope will not allow to have originated the *sobriquet* of “the Doctor”—brought about an amendment before any steps had been taken for the appointment of a regency. But it was a narrow escape, and the risk that had been run made a deep impression upon Pitt. As soon as the King was well enough to receive the message, Pitt sent him a promise, by Dr. Willis,<sup>1</sup> that he would never during the King's lifetime renew the question of the Catholic claims. As soon as this had been done, it occurred to some of Pitt's subordinates, who were sharing his loss of office without sharing in any degree his credit for magnanimity, that as the cause of his resignation had disappeared, there was no reason why the resignation itself should not follow its example. Pitt did not view this process of reasoning with absolute disfavour. He would take no step himself; but he did not conceal his willingness to resume office from his friends, or forbid them to mention it to others. But to Addington the idea did not seem quite so natural. He was not so much impressed with his own enormous inferiority to Pitt as Dundas and Pelham<sup>2</sup> seem to have expected. Moreover, having been made to resign the Speakership by the representation that he alone could save the country from ruin in such a crisis, he was not inclined to fall between the two stools, or to become the victim of a lovers' quarrel between the King and Mr. Pitt. So he gave the strongest possible discouragement

<sup>1</sup> [See p. 106.]

<sup>2</sup> [1756–1826. A Rockingham Whig and a placeman under Pitt and Addington. Succeeded his father as Earl of Chichester in 1805.]

to Dundas's modest proposal. As soon as his reluctance was ascertained, Pitt interfered to rescue him from further pressure, and suppressed the murmurings of his own displaced friends with a strong hand.

Pitt's inconsistent conduct on this occasion has been very severely blamed. Even the calm and judicial mind of Sir G. C. Lewis refuses to acquit him. "Why," he asks, "if he was so willing to remain in March, was he so resolved on resigning in February; or why, if he was so resolved upon resigning in February, was he so willing to remain in March?" No doubt, if the intervening fact of the King's insanity be left out of sight, Pitt's conduct was marked by a levity worthy only of a coquette. But this fact, with all the contingent consequences that hung on it, entirely altered the state of facts upon which he had to form his judgment. It was one of those political cases of conscience of which we have spoken, which a constitutional Minister may at any moment have to solve, in which a possible act of patriotism lies on one side and a certainty of obloquy on the other. Whatever decision Pitt had taken, he could not have expected to avoid some degree of blame from those who were not disposed to view his conduct leniently. Lord Stanhope puts the case on Pitt's behalf as forcibly as it can be put:—

"I would venture, in the first place, to ask how the critic can feel the smallest difficulty in explaining at least, if not in justifying, the change which he here describes. As reasonably might he state his surprise that the Emperor of Austria was not willing to treat on the 1st of December, 1805, and was willing on the 3rd of the same month; the fact

being that the battle of Austerlitz was fought on the intervening day. The intervening illness of George the Third affords, as I conceive, a no less clear, a no less sufficient explanation. When it became manifest that the proposal of the Roman Catholic claims had not only wrung the mind of the aged King with anguish, but altogether obscured and overthrown it, the duty of a statesman, even if untouched by personal considerations, acting solely on public grounds, was then to refrain from any such proposal during the remainder of His Majesty's reign. Loyal Roman Catholics themselves could not expect, could not even desire, their claims to be under such circumstances urged. Let me moreover observe that the restraint which Mr. Pitt laid upon himself in consequence was one that came to be adopted by all other leading politicians of that age. It was on the same understanding that Lord Castlereagh took office in 1803; Mr. Tierney also in the same year; Mr. Canning in 1804; Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox in 1806. All these, with whatever reluctance, agreed that on this most tender point the conscience of George the Third should be no further pressed. And surely if the ground here stated was sufficient, as I deem it, to justify Mr. Tierney, who had never before held office, and who owed no special attachment to the King, the ground was far stronger in the case of Mr. Pitt, who had served His Majesty as Prime Minister through most trying difficulties and for more than seventeen years.

"It may be said, however, that although Mr. Pitt was right to relinquish the Catholic Question in March, 1801, he should not have been willing to resume office at once upon such terms. If, however, the Catholic Question were honourably and for good reason laid aside, the special, and indeed the only, reason for calling in 'the Doctor' was gone. Under him there was every prospect that the new Government would be a weak one—even far weaker

than, from various causes which I shall hereafter explain, it really proved. I have already shown what were the anticipations upon this point of so experienced and so far-sighted a politician as Dundas. A weak Government was then in prospect; and that at a period when the national interests called most loudly for a strong one. It was the duty of a patriot Minister to avert, if he honourably could, that evil from his country. It was his duty not to shrink from the service of his Sovereign, if that Sovereign thought fit to ask his aid, and if the question which had so recently severed them was from other and inevitable causes to sever them no more.

"For these reasons I believe, and must be permitted to maintain, that the conduct of Mr. Pitt in March, 1801, is free from all ambiguity, and open to no just imputation, but guided from first to last by the same high sense of duty as distinguished his whole career." (Vol. iii. pp. 311-313.)

Whether Pitt was right or wrong, his change of conduct was intelligible enough. In February, 1801, he had to consider which was the least evil—that Addington should become Minister, or that the Catholics of Ireland should think that they had been deceived by their Government. In April the question had wholly changed. The notorious illness of the King had set all suspicions of bad faith at rest; and a change was threatened far more formidable in its results, and far more irremediable in its character, than the accession of Addington to office. The question which he had then to decide was, whether it was better that the Catholics should wait till the King's death, or that the King should be driven mad. As the event has proved, England would have flourished, whichever horn of the

dilemma had been chosen. At the time, however, it had been proved by experience that the Catholic claims could be postponed without danger; whereas the dangers of a Regency were untried and unknown. There had been no Regency in English history since the Reformation. In French history the experiment of a Regency had been exhaustively tried, but not with results of a character to encourage imitation. In any case, whatever the expediency of the question may have been, Mr. Pitt will be forgiven by most men for having declined deliberately to drive into insanity an aged Sovereign, whose confidence and intimacy he had uninterruptedlly enjoyed for the period of seventeen years, merely for the purpose of hastening by a short space the relief of the Catholics from a grievance that was in a great measure sentimental.

His conduct, upon this as upon most other occasions, appears in the brightest light when it is contrasted with the conduct of Mr. Fox. As long as we compare it with what might theoretically have been done, or with what we, judging after the event, would have been inclined to recommend, portions of it may seem open to doubt. But when we compare it with what was actually done by the idol of a whole school of statesmen, we see how high Mr. Pitt soared above the highest ideal of Liberal politicians. Mr. Pitt pressed the King while he was in office, and spared him when he had left office. Mr. Fox took precisely the opposite course. As long as he was in opposition, no words that he could use could be too strong in denouncing the religious scruples of the King and his supporters. The mention of the Coronation Oath was one of the most disgusting pieces of impudence and folly

he had seen. Even so late as the year 1805, he was virtuously indignant with Mr. Pitt because no Catholic Relief Bill had been recommended from the throne—"a subject so important, that if it be not speedily taken into our consideration, no honest man can say there is anything like stability and security to that part of the empire."<sup>1</sup> A year passed, and most unexpectedly he found himself in office. Count Stahremberg, the Austrian minister, very naturally asked him whether he did not feel a difficulty respecting the Roman Catholic Question. "None at all," said Fox; "I am determined not to annoy my Sovereign by bringing it forward."<sup>2</sup> The seals of the Foreign Office had exercised a marvellous virtue in quickening the loyalty which had slumbered for so many years.

Pitt's self-imposed exile from office did not last very long. Perhaps it was that he had been too well used to power to bear to see it for long in other and weaker hands. Perhaps it was that he listened too readily to the suggestions and innuendoes of his political friends, who were less tolerant of inactivity even than himself. Certain it is that his hearty support of the Addington Government grew beautifully less with each succeeding year. In 1801 he was almost enthusiastic in his championship of the promoted Speaker. In 1802 there were only occasional clouds between the two former friends. In 1803 Pitt treated Addington with distance, refused him his advice, and pointedly abstained from commanding him in Parliament. In 1804 he joined with Fox and Grenville to throw him out. When Addington gave way in consequence of this combined attack, Pitt attempted to bring his

<sup>1</sup> Jan. 15.

<sup>2</sup> "Life of Lord Sidmouth," ii. 435.

new allies into office, and to include in his Cabinet all the existing Parliamentary talent of the country. But the King's aversion to Fox was too strong to be overcome. He could not forgive either his share in the corruption of the Prince of Wales, or the open support which he had given to the Jacobins. Pitt pressed it on him with great earnestness, but the King stood firm. As soon as Pitt saw that the King would rather fall back upon the Addington Government than assent to any combination that should include Fox's name, he gave way. Lord Grenville, for some inexplicable reason, preferred to cast in his lot with the new ally with whom he did not agree, rather than with the old chief with whom he did; and Pitt was accordingly forced, in Lord Grenville's words, "to eke out his Ministry with Roses and Dundases." With a Cabinet thus patched up, he resumed office, and Addington, Grenville, and many of the old Whigs who had joined Pitt in 1792, now rejoined Fox in opposition.

Two separate complaints have been urged against Pitt on account of his conduct at this juncture—one on behalf of Addington, the other on behalf of Fox. Addington's admirers have been comparatively rare, and therefore his grievance has found few advocates to press it; but if any one was ill-used in the transaction, he was certainly the man. He had been enticed from the dignified repose of the Speaker's chair by an assurance that his acceptance of office alone stood between the Crown and ruin, and by the promise of Pitt's cordial support. He had broken no pledge, belied no profession, and had not committed any evident blunder upon which his adversaries could lay their hands. He was a mediocrity, it was true: but he

had always been a mediocrity. What he was in 1801, that he was still in 1804; and after having been lured out of the Speaker's chair to save the State in the first of these two years, it seemed hard to throw him away like a sucked orange in the second, because it was Mr. Pitt's good pleasure to return to office. It is true Mr. Pitt had given no promises of *perpetual* support: but he had promised his support in very emphatic terms. It would have been better for his own fame if, before he was so profuse in his professions, he had realized the necessary consequences of Addington's incapacity, and had recognized his own inability to stand patiently by while the Government was being mismanaged.

On the other hand, few passages in Mr. Pitt's life have been so angrily assailed by the friends of Mr. Fox. It certainly needs to be a warm admirer of Mr. Fox to understand even the imputed crime, without entering upon the proof of it. Mr. Pitt thought that the circumstances of the time demanded a comprehensive Ministry. A factious and powerful Opposition would have added seriously to the difficulties of the country, in the midst of its struggle for existence; and the only way of avoiding a factious Opposition was by buying up the possible heads of it. Therefore Mr. Pitt proposed to give office to Mr. Fox and his friends. Doubts have been thrown upon the sincerity of Mr. Pitt in proposing this profitable bargain to the King. Those doubts, however, have been generally given up. If need were, the correspondence between the Minister and the King, which Lord Stanhope publishes, would set the most obstinate scepticism at rest. But Pitt's wishes only went up

to a certain point. He desired to purchase Fox ; but there was a limit to the price which he was prepared to pay. He had no intention, by persisting in his demand, again to worry the King into insanity. There was the more reason for precaution upon this head, that in the beginning of the year the King had suffered a return of the old symptoms of 1788 and 1801. To avert this danger, Pitt had consented to abandon the claims of the Catholics ; and he did not rate so much more highly the claims of Mr. Fox, or the value of his goodwill, as to persist in his case when he had yielded in theirs. This was no sudden impulse. He had distinctly explained, both to Fox and Grenville, that he should yield to any objection on the King's part, before the operations in the House of Commons were commenced by which Addington was displaced. It would seem to be self-evident that the course he took was the only course that he could have rightly taken. Whatever the advantages may have been of Fox's presence in the Government, or rather of his absence from the Opposition bench, no one can seriously maintain that they outweighed the dangers of a Regency crisis in the face of a foreign invasion. And the obvious course for every genuine patriot, under the grave circumstances of the time, would have been to join together to make the strongest Ministry that the King would be content to accept. But Lord Grenville, by some mysterious process of reasoning or of temper, contrived to persuade himself and his friends that the best way of remedying Fox's exclusion by the King was for them all to exclude themselves. Accordingly he flew into furious opposition ; and to mark his disapproval of Pitt's concession to the King in 1804,

he changed his party altogether, and for fifteen years acted with men of whose pacific policy abroad and reforming policy at home he equally disapproved. It has been said by Lord Macaulay that if Pitt had persisted, the King would have given way, as he gave way two years later, before "the immutable resolution of Lord Grenville." The reply is very simple. The circumstances of 1806 were not the circumstances of 1804. The King was not recovering from a fit of insanity, and the army of Boulogne was not threatening the English coast ; and consequently Lord Grenville could press his demands with safety. On the other hand, Addington was no longer in the House of Commons, and therefore, in default of any other leader to whom he could have had recourse, the King was compelled to surrender at discretion. But the haste with which he rid himself of his "immutably resolved" Minister, on the very first opportunity that offered, showed how keenly he felt the humiliation to which he had been made to stoop. In 1804 it would have driven him mad ; or if it had not driven him mad, it would have irritated him into returning to Addington again. It is difficult to say, under the circumstances of the moment, which of the two alternatives would have been the most disastrous for the country.

In any case a lukewarm enthusiasm for Fox can hardly be imputed to Pitt as an unpardonable sin. Pitt can hardly have been ignorant of the bitter and relentless hatred with which Fox continued to regard him. It is not probable that the scurrilous abuse of Pitt, in which we know from Fox's letters that he indulged in private intercourse, can have remained wholly unknown to the object of it. It

may well be doubted whether Fox could have heartily worked with a man whom, at the time, he was designating in his correspondence as a "mean, low-minded dog," "a mean rascal." It is certain that by such a coalition Pitt must have foregone the allegiance of many of the stanchest members of his party, who looked upon such an alliance as "nothing less than execrable." It is difficult to believe that Fox could have been, under any circumstances, a useful instrument in carrying on a war which for ten years he had opposed with such unmeasured vehemence. The man who could write to his political friend, "The truth is, I am gone something further in hate to the English Government than you and the rest of my friends are, and certainly further than can with prudence be avowed: the triumph of the French Government over the English does in fact afford me a degree of pleasure which it is very difficult to disguise," was not exactly the man to conduct a French war with vigour and success.<sup>1</sup>

But the blames and the regrets of historians upon this point appear to be very vain. If Pitt had been ever so resolute, or George III. ever so yielding, it seems that Fox had made up his mind not to take office in any Government of which Pitt was Prime Minister. It is needless to argue that, considering the temper which then prevailed in the nation, as well as the existing necessities of the empire, any other arrangement would have been absurd. Lord Stanhope suggests that the offer of the Foreign Secretaryship to Fox, even if it had been refused, would have been of advantage to Pitt, in that it would have released Lord Grenville from his engagements, and have enabled him to join the Ministry.

<sup>1</sup> Fox's "Mem. and Corr." vol. iii. p. 349.

It seems very doubtful whether Lord Grenville's difficulties, which were difficulties of mere temper, would have been smoothed by so technical an excuse. If his party allegiance was in question, it was due to Pitt, whom he had served for eighteen years, and to whom the whole of his political importance was due. If his opinions had been in question, they assuredly should not have inclined him towards Fox. The "co-operation," as it was delicately called, of the most extreme advocate of war and the most extreme advocate of peace could not have rested on any congeniality of opinion. But as his sole motive appears to have been his desire to humiliate the King, it is not likely that he would have been appeased by anything short of an agreement to Mr. Fox's utmost demands. His persistence should not, however, be too hardly censured, for it was fraught with advantage to his country. If he had joined Pitt, he must, upon Pitt's death, have become the leader of Pitt's successors. He would have enjoyed the chief share of the influence which Pitt's great ascendancy secured to the statesmen who claimed to inherit his traditions. In that case it would have fallen to him to shape the policy under which the war was to be terminated, and the foundations of the peace that followed it were to be laid. He would, in short, have taken the lead which fell to Lord Castlereagh in his default. In such transactions his unreasoning obstinacy, and incapacity for the management of men, would have poorly replaced Lord Castlereagh's cool, self-restrained sagacity.

But it is not only upon these petty personal details that Pitt's conduct during this concluding

portion of his career has been arraigned. The whole policy of his administration, the whole of his system of defence against the enemies at home and abroad by which England was beset, have been assailed with great vehemence by the Whig writers of later times. Those who assailed him during his lifetime drew no distinction between the earlier and the later phases of his career. They did not pretend to discern any difference between his principles of action before and after the overthrow of monarchy in France. Fox and Grey found it all consistent, because they looked upon it as all bad; but the writers who profess to have inherited their principles, and have accepted the obligation of their defence, are precluded from these easy tactics. Lord Macaulay and Lord Russell cannot re-echo the invectives of Fox and Grey against Pitt's financial and commercial policy, because that policy rests on principles which the Whig party have since been driven to adopt; neither can they indorse the condemnation with which Pitt's successive measures of uniting Ireland to England were received by the Whig orators of that day, for they have themselves upheld the Union against O'Connell. But they do not on that account abandon Fox and Grey. They pass these errors gently over, and content themselves with remarks upon Fox's genial character and Grey's early promise. But there is a portion of Pitt's career in regard to which their hands are freer. Mr. Pitt's mode of confronting the sudden perils with which the French Revolution menaced both England and Europe is of necessity more open to criticism than any other portion of his policy. The dangers which he was called upon to meet were in their

nature novel and exceptional, and the remedies they required must needs be exceptional too. The mode in which domestic sedition is to be repressed or foreign attack averted involves no principle, and therefore cannot expose those who censure it to any charge of inconsistency. Recent Whig historians, therefore, have taken a course exactly the reverse of that which was taken by the majority of Whig partisans at the time. Those who followed Fox when he was alive upheld him while he resisted Pitt's policy during peace, and renounced him when he inveighed against Pitt's policy during the war. Those who have canonized Fox since his death cannot follow him in his censures of the French treaty or the Irish Trade Resolutions ; but they make up for their desertion by the zeal with which they reproduce his denunciations of Pitt's repression of Jacobinism at home and his resistance to French aggression abroad.

The first part of the charge—that of undue severity to the Jacobins at home—has been repeated frequently enough ; but of recent years it has been renewed with a rather gentler emphasis and in a less confident tone. The sacred right of insurrection has lost many of its most devoted admirers both in the Old World and in the New, in the course of the last fifteen years. Lord Russell himself passes over the question of domestic sedition with a gentle hand. Possibly he did not feel, after the experience of the year 1848,<sup>1</sup> that he could

<sup>1</sup> [By the Coercion Act of 1848 the provisions of Pitt's Act of 1796 against incitements to attacks on the Sovereign were extended to Ireland, and such incitements were made felonies instead of treasons, incitements to rebellion being put on the same footing. The Alien Acts were at the same time renewed. State prosecutions of the Young Ireland party followed.]

denounce "Gagging Bills" and State Prosecutions with the unhesitating fervour that would be looked for in the panegyrist of Mr. Fox. For a hearty and vigorous reiteration of Fox's attacks upon this point we must look to Lord Macaulay, who was less fettered by the entanglements of office. The accusation which that eloquent writer has recorded in one of his latest works, charges the Minister "with harsh laws harshly executed, with Alien Bills and Gagging Bills, with cruel punishments inflicted upon some political agitators, with unjustifiable prosecutions instituted against others." This is a strange hotchpotch of charges! When he wrote this sentence Lord Macaulay must have been under a momentary delusion that he was describing the guilt of some Turkish Vizier, not that of an English Minister. England was not governed by a despotism even in the reign of George III. Ministers did not pronounce the sentences, if they were "cruel :" nor had they—at least in the cases of treason to which Lord Macaulay seems to allude—the power of instituting "unjustifiable prosecutions" at their own discretion. If such things took place, they were the fault of the judges and grand juries, who are provided by the law for the special purpose of guarding against them. Mr. Pitt had no more power over these authorities than he had over the Emperor of Russia. No doubt many violent things were said and done; but they were not said or done by Pitt. The carnage practised by the friends of liberty in Paris had filled all classes with a horror which occasionally extended itself to the judicial authorities, and hurried them beyond the limits of humanity and prudence. But there is no pretence of justice in

## "UNJUSTIFIABLE PROSECUTIONS" 163

selecting Pitt, who was neither a magistrate nor a juryman, to be the scapegoat on whose back all the sins of all the magistrates and jurymen in the country should be laid. Lord Stanhope very justly says :—

"I do not conceive the fame of Mr. Pitt involved in every act of every magistrate and every judge. I do not think it bound up with all the judicial decisions of Lord Chancellor Loughborough. In several cases, then, which the adversaries of this Government have held forth and selected out of many, I do not deny, and, on the contrary, intend to show, that the zeal of some men, and the fears of others, transported them beyond the bounds of right. But that is not the point which Lord Macaulay puts."

In truth the responsibility of instituting prosecutions can only attach to an English Minister in a very limited degree. If he is advised that a flagrant breach of the law has been committed and can be proved, he has scarcely any choice but to order a prosecution. His responsibility, on the other hand, if he neglected to do so, and any evil resulted from his neglect, would be very deep indeed. It need hardly be said that the moment the order has issued from his lips, his responsibility is absolutely at an end. There may be a show of reason, though a very slight one, in charging upon him "unjustifiable prosecutions," if such there were. But it would be as reasonable to blame Julius Cæsar as Mr. Pitt for the "cruel punishments" which the judges in their discretion may have thought fit to inflict. He might as well be held responsible for Lord Kenyon's fury against the forestallers of corn.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [In July, 1800, a jury convicted an eminent cornfactor of

He was undoubtedly answerable, however, for the repressive measures which he prevailed upon the House of Commons to pass. He procured the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act on several occasions ; he prohibited secret societies ; he assumed a control over the immigration of aliens ; and he placed both printers and lecturers under the necessity of obtaining licences from justices of the peace. There is no doubt that these were curtailments of the liberty that had for many years been enjoyed in these islands. There is no doubt that they were foreign to the system of government which Pitt had hitherto pursued. The question is, whether they were justified by the circumstances in which he suddenly found himself ; or whether they were a feeble concession to the clamour of the frightened country gentlemen.

It seems almost a hopeless controversy to decide. There are no data, no fixed principles on which to reason. No one disputes that attempts at insurrection justify a proportionate coercion. No one disputes that the coercion may be disproportional, and may degenerate into causeless tyranny. But between those two limits all is indefinite and vague. There is no standard by which the measure of coercion can be adjusted to the measure of sedition. To say that the coercion must be no greater than the necessity of the case requires is merely to shroud the difficulty in verbiage. It is a waste of words to argue whether, if Mr. Pitt had abstained from coercive measures,

“ forestalling and regrating ” for having bought corn at 41s. and sold it again at 44s. on the same day. Lord Kenyon told the jury they had conferred by their verdict almost the greatest benefit that ever was conferred by any jury.]

the "liquid fire of Jacobinical principles" would or would not have desolated England. There are no means available to us, as there were none to him, of solving such a problem. His condemnation or acquittal must be decided by other tests than that of hypothetical prophecy. If we wish to determine whether he did or did not go beyond the urgency of the case, our only course is to compare his proceedings with those of other Governments in other lands or times. It is impossible to institute an exact comparison, because no two historical situations are exactly parallel. But still we have seen enough of revolution during the last seventy years, and of the mode in which those Governments have met it who have met it the most successfully, to be able to form at least a relative estimate of the emergency which Mr. Pitt had to confront. We have every ground for believing that the urgency of the danger was very great. We know that he entertained that conviction himself. He expressed the opinion in private to Wilberforce, when he could have had no motive for exaggerating his fears, that if he were to resign, his head would be off in six months.<sup>1</sup> Had it stood alone, this expression of opinion should have counted for a great deal. Pitt's courage was high, and his information was at least better than that of any other living man. But he did not stand alone. Two Secret Committees in 1794 and 1799, chosen on each occasion by ballot, after investigating the evidence which the Government had to lay before them, and composed of some of the shrewdest men of the day, reported that the ramifications of

<sup>1</sup> [This was said on November 16, 1795, at supper in his own house, to Mornington and Wilberforce.]

conspiracy were very extensive, and that the danger of revolt was imminent. And it is to be remembered that these reports are the best evidence which the nature of the case permits us to obtain. Conspiracies do not publish their proceedings from day to day, and unsuccessful conspiracies, especially if they are composed of illiterate men, leave no record behind them. It is easy for Lord Russell<sup>1</sup> to assert that one of these societies only consisted of the frequenters of some thirty low taverns. It is easy for Lord Macaulay to lay down with indefinite confidence that "the Reformers never dreamt of subverting Government by physical force." They have no means of information that can justify them in traversing the averments of the Cabinet and the Committees. The observations of this or that unofficial man are absolutely valueless compared with the intelligence that it was within the power of the Government to collect, and that was probably to be found in the sealed papers that were laid before the Secret Committees. What those papers contained it was, of course, impossible to divulge. Some things, indeed, were matters of notoriety. No one was ignorant of the existence of the treasonable societies, of their correspondence with the French Convention, or of their Jacobinical doctrines and aspirations. It was known that both French and Irish agents were extensively employed, and that French money was lavishly spent to propagate revolutionary opinions. There was no need for concealing the fact that the societies had been deeply concerned in the naval mutinies, or that they had been largely tampering with the soldiers, or that formidable risings in

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Fox," ii. 293.

London formed part of the plan of rebellion which the Society of United Irishmen had contrived. But upon the details of the schemes of these societies, and upon the evidence of their extensive power, the Committees and the Government were necessarily silent. Mr. Fox spoke entirely at his ease when he challenged the Government to produce their evidence of the insurrectionary spirit which they professed to fear. He knew that the disclosure for which he called was an impossibility. It would have discredited and jeopardized every spy whom the Government were employing. It is a grave error to reason or to act as though the existence of a conspiracy that has not succeeded were necessarily susceptible of public proof. The solemn declaration of those to whom the investigation has been entrusted is the only evidence of which the nature of the case admits. The statements, moreover, of Mr. Pitt's Government with respect to conspiracies deserve especial credit, for they had one great opportunity of proving their acquaintance with this particular subject-matter to the world. The success with which they tracked and foiled the conspiracy in Ireland, which commanded so large a share of popular support, sufficiently demonstrates the accuracy of their secret information. Lord Auckland's reports from the Hague show that the apprehensions which they entertained were not confined to the English Government—

"It is known that immense sums have been distributed in England by order of the *Conseil Exécutif* to make an insurrection in different parts of the kingdom in the last week of November, or in the first week of this month. And the villains were so

confident of success that they anticipated it in Paris, *and I have accordingly seen Paris bulletins and letters with all the details of a revolt in Westminister, similar to many of the horrid scenes in Paris.*"—  
*Lord Auckland to Sir M. Eden, Dec. 7, 1792.*

Surely this intelligence might be held to justify an Alien Bill! The Dutch diplomatic despatches of the time contain abundant evidence that the proofs and details of a plan for seizing the Tower and effecting a revolution were in Mr. Pitt's hands.<sup>1</sup> We have, therefore, on the one side the assertion of Mr. Fox that there was no danger of an insurrection; and on the other side the assertion of the Ministers and the Secret Committees, that the danger was very great. We know that the Ministers and the Committees had before them evidence to which they at least professed to attach great weight; and it does not appear that Mr. Fox professed to have any evidence at all. We have no choice, then, but to trust those who spoke from information to which we have not access, in preference to those who avowedly spoke from no information whatsoever. It must be taken as an historical fact, that a formidable conspiracy did exist; that large numbers of the lower classes, especially those of Irish race, were tainted with Jacobin doctrines, and inspired with Jacobin hopes; and that strenuous efforts were being made to bring about a bloody revolution, such as that which was raging in France. Under such circumstances, were Mr. Pitt's measures too severe? Did he overstep the precautions to which other Governments in the presence of similar dangers have had recourse? It

<sup>1</sup> Von Sybel, ii. 57.

is needless to refer to the examples that have been furnished by Germany or France. It is notorious that Mr. Pitt's coercion was a mere pastime compared with the measures which in those countries have been again and again thought necessary for the preservation of society. Such examples will probably be repudiated, as inapplicable to the English people. Fortunately we have another standard of comparison, to which no exception can be taken. The United States cannot be accused of monarchical leanings, or of following old-world traditions. The right of insurrection has been as strongly upheld there as it ever has been, or is ever likely to be, in any other civilized community. In no other country have the claims of the executive upon the obedience of its subjects been so lightly rated. They have recently been plunged into difficulties such as those to which in the course of the last seventy years all European nations have been exposed. It will be instructive to inquire how they have met their troubles. We shall be able to measure the extent of Mr. Pitt's tyrannical excesses by studying the conduct of a State founded upon the sovereignty of the people, and embodying the rights of insurrection in its constitution. What is the teaching of their example? The cases are not dissimilar. New England is as loyal to the Union as England was to its Sovereign. The Confederates are as anxious as the French were to propagate rebellious sentiments among their Northern neighbours. The Northern States are threatened as England was by treason in their midst, though of the loyalty of the mass of the population in both cases there can be no doubt. How has the model Republic behaved under the

trial? Has she rigidly upheld the Habeas Corpus Act which Pitt has been so much blamed for suspending? Has she jealously preserved the liberty of the press with which Pitt sacrilegiously tampered? It would have been happy for the United States if they had retained one-tenth part of the practical liberties which England enjoyed under the "harsh laws, harshly executed," of Mr. Pitt. The repressive vigour of the "land of the free" has thrown Mr. Pitt's precedents far into the shade. The fear of retaliation, on the part of a powerful rebellion, has deterred Mr. Lincoln's Government hitherto from inflicting the punishment of death. It has been often threatened; but the menace of reprisals has prevented the threat from being carried into execution. But, short of this extreme, no restriction upon freedom has been thought too severe that should facilitate the operations and increase the security of the executive. Hundreds have been cast into filthy dungeons, without cause assigned or trial allowed. The post-office has been used without scruple as an engine for repressing the free expression of opinion, either in private letters or in public journals. Women have been incarcerated for wearing seditious colours; judges have been imprisoned for executing the law; members of the legislature have been seized under the suspicion that they intended to give votes opposed to the policy of the Government; military officers have presided over the polling-booths, and have systematically and avowedly excluded the votes that were hostile to the party of their chiefs. This is the pattern method of dealing with conspirators that has been set up for the imitation of the world by the model

Republic. If Mr. Pitt diverged at all from the usual practice of Governments before and after his own time, in dealing with insurrection, it was on the side of leniency, and not on the side of harshness. If, then, with Lord Macaulay, we condemn him for his measures of repression, we condemn with him the universal policy of all Governments, republican as well as monarchical. To have departed from this universal tradition would have been to stake the existence of England upon a novel experiment, a sentimental trust in the virtues of conspirators, to which their language and conduct gave no encouragement, and which no previous Government had ever entertained.

We were wrong. There was one Government that had entertained that trust, and had acted upon it: there was one precedent for the neglect of repressive measures in the face of a wide-spread conspiracy: there was one example of that tender confidence in the moderation of the people, which even the democratic Government of America is too cynical to feel; but it was an example that acted rather as a beacon than as a guide. Those who judge Pitt's domestic policy during the revolutionary wars, should never forget that he was fresh from a spectacle which would have disposed to far harsher measures a mind less balanced and less humane than his. He had seen the gentler policy tried out: he had heard the flattering promises and roseate dreams that accompanied its commencement: he had watched the fearful tragedies that marked its close. We who live at a distance from the period of the French Revolution, and have witnessed many a revolution since, can form no conception of the depth of the horror with which it impressed the

generation before whose eyes its deeds of blood were perpetrated. Such things were then new to Englishmen. They were not then familiar with the ideas of *mitraillades* and *noyades*, and prison massacres, and the never-resting guillotine. They were almost stunned with the horrors amid which the new democracy was making its entry into the old world—almost maddened when they found that there were any among themselves who were ready to make of England the pandemonium into which Liberal theories had already metamorphosed France. They were ready to welcome every policy that would rescue them from such a fate. Why trust to old remedies? The very terror of the new state of things was its utter novelty. The rapidity, the contagiousness, the appalling results of the disease, were new to the experience of mankind. It was madness to be content with the slow and feeble treatment of a statecraft that was antiquated. If any fact was clear amid the bewildering confusion of the French Revolution, it was that the gentleness, the concessions, the morbid tenderness of Louis XVI. had only tended to precipitate his own and his people's doom, and aggravate the ferocity of those whom he tried by kindness to disarm. It was a lesson against over-conciliatory government, which a whole generation of statesmen were not likely to forget. It was natural enough that the mariner should occupy himself chiefly with avoiding the reefs upon which his consort had just foundered before his eyes. It was equally intelligible that the statesman to whom the destinies of England were entrusted should think more of the dangers of anarchy and mob-rule than of any other dangers; and should have preferred to err, if he erred at all,

on the side of excessive precaution. But, in truth, the very facts which were calculated to magnify the danger to his eyes were calculated to enhance it in reality. The presence of the French Revolution seemed entirely to have changed the natures with which statesmen had to deal. Men were not in those days to be measured by ordinary standards, nor their acts calculated by any ordinary computation. The reasoning which in other times had held them seemed empty verbiage now. They had forgotten the emotions which had formed "the cheap defence" of order. The moral epidemic that was in the air distorted their intellects, and made all their better feelings the ministers of crime. In the presence of the paroxysms of anarchical frenzy which were racking the nations of Europe, it would have been mere fool-hardiness to have relied upon the restraints which had been ample in calmer times.

Pitt's foreign policy, during this eventful period, has been impugned, if possible, even more vehemently than his domestic measures. It has been assailed upon the most opposite grounds. He has been blamed because his war against France was a Tory crusade, and because it was not a Tory crusade; because he considered the interests of the French Royal Family too much, and because he considered them too little; because he neglected the balance of power by permitting the dismemberment of Poland, and because he upheld the balance of power by arresting the dismemberment of Austria. Perhaps it would be safe to leave these conflicting forces to neutralize each other. When Davie Deans pronounced Reuben Butler's grace to be too short, and the Captain of Knockdunder pronounced it to

be too long, his discerning biographer justly concludes that it was of precisely the right length. It might be fair to argue on similar principles that Pitt must have exactly hit the golden mean in a policy which could provoke such contradictory denunciations. But as the two distinguished Whig critics whom we have named have recently reproduced (between them) the whole of this motley catalogue of accusations, it may be worth while to remind our readers of the exact nature of the circumstances under which Pitt went to war with France, and the real extent to which that war was a success. The *cultus* of Fox exacts considerable sacrifices from its votaries; and in order to relieve him from the charge of unexampled factiousness in the impediments which he attempted to offer to the Government at moments of the utmost danger, they are compelled to subject the events of history to a little gentle violence.

The accusation that Pitt undertook a crusade against democratic principles in France, which has been reproduced so often by Liberal writers, and to which Lord Russell gives the sanction of his name, is another curious instance of the tendency to centre upon the prominent man of a generation all the faults and follies with which that generation can be charged. There is no doubt that in that generation there were very many eminent men who wished for war, and wished to make it a war of principles. Dundas, Burke, the King himself, belonged to this number; and they had the great mass of the clergy and country gentlemen at their back. It is no new thing that, among the mass of men who act with no responsibility and little knowledge, passion should be more powerful than

reason; or that the same error should, in exciting times, extend to others whose high position shuts them out from the same excuse. And if ever it could be justifiable to wage war for the gratification of mere feeling, the excuse might be claimed for a war against the fiends who ruled in Paris at the beginning of 1793. But whatever the blame-worthiness of those may have been who did wish to preach an Anti-Jacobin crusade, it can in no way affect anybody but themselves. These feelings found no place in the calmer mind of Pitt, nor did he suffer his own fixed course to be swayed by the passionate impulses of others. Lord Macaulay's assertion that he was hurried into the war against his own better judgment, Lord Russell's assertion, that he declared a political crusade against the Jacobins, are accusations which it is impossible to prove from the history as it actually occurred. The crusade was all on the other side. So accurate a copy of the wolf's reproaches against the lamb is not often to be met.

In the spring of 1792 Pitt, as is well known, neither wished nor looked for war. He gave the best pledge of his pacific views and hopes by repealing taxes and reducing establishments. Neither the declaration of war made by the Assembly against Austria, in the month of April, nor the Duke of Brunswick's invasion which followed it, nor the earnest solicitations of Russia and Prussia, tempted him to compromise in the slightest degree the neutral position he had taken up. As long as English interests were untouched, he pursued the wise policy of non-intervention. But English interests could not remain untouched very long. The first onset of the French, as soon

as the Duke of Brunswick had been driven back, was naturally directed to the frontier of Flanders, which was Austria's weakest point. Belgium was soon overrun. The antiquated military system of Austria was no match for the youthful energy of the Revolutionary strategy. The victory of Jemappes<sup>1</sup> carried Dumouriez to the banks of the Scheldt; and the Revolutionary Government intimated their intention of opening the navigation of the river to armed vessels for the purpose of investing Antwerp. At this point it became impossible for England to continue to look on in silence. The closing of the Scheldt was guaranteed by treaty with Holland; and we were bound by treaty to interfere on her behalf, if her rights were assailed. Nor was this the only point where this aggression upon neutral rights concerned us. England has ever watched the Scheldt with an especial jealousy. It has always been one of the cardinal maxims of her policy to secure that it should not fall into the hands of any power whom she had need to fear. Napoleon fully appreciated the sagacity of this resolution. He was always wont to say that Antwerp, in the hands of France, was a loaded pistol held to England's head; and accordingly, in the last desperate negotiations at Châtillon, which preceded his fall by a few weeks, he always clung to the hope that, whatever else might be wrenched from him, he should not need to surrender Antwerp.<sup>2</sup> Lord Russell himself has

<sup>1</sup> [Nov. 6, 1792.]

<sup>2</sup> [In a letter to the Emperor Francis, dated Feb. 21, 1814, during the congress of Châtillon, he says, "Jamais je ne céderai Anvers et la Belgique."—"Corr. de Nap. I.," vol. 27, p. 225; see, too, his letter to Caulaincourt of Feb. 26, 1814, *ib.* p. 253.]

never been slow to recognize the same truth, and laid down, not long ago, that the invasion of Belgium by France would be an aggression which England could not safely condone. In both aspects, as a matter of policy, and as a matter of treaty obligation, it was impossible to submit to this act of unprovoked aggression. The necessity of resistance was wholly unconnected with any question relating to the form of government in France. It would have been as necessary ten years before as it was then, and it would be equally necessary now, to fulfil a treaty covenant and to guard the mouths of the Scheldt from France. But still the Government clung to peace. On the 6th of November Lord Grenville was writing to Lord Auckland that the best mode of preventing the introduction of Jacobin principles into England was to "keep ourselves out of the struggle on the Continent;" and on the following day, in a letter to his brother, he was still indulging in projects for the remission of taxation. The following letter, which Lord Stanhope has printed, shows how sincerely Pitt himself desired peace, and how perfectly free he was from any design of "crusading against democracy." It is addressed to his colleague Lord Stafford:—

" Downing-street, Nov. 13, 1792.

" MY DEAR LORD,

" The strange and unfortunate events which have followed one another so rapidly on the Continent are, in many views, matter of serious and anxious consideration. That which presses the most relates to the situation of Holland, as your Lordship will find from the enclosed despatch from Lord Auckland, and as must indeed be the case in consequence of the events in Flanders. However unfortunate it would be to find this country in any shape

## 178 STANHOPE'S LIFE OF PITT:—II

committed, it seems absolutely impossible to hesitate as to supporting our ally in case of necessity; and the explicit declaration of our sentiments is the most likely way to prevent the case occurring. We have, therefore, thought it best to send without delay instructions to Lord Auckland to present a memorial to the States, of which I enclose a copy. I likewise enclose a copy to Sir Morton Eden,<sup>1</sup> at Berlin; and those to Vienna are nearly to the same effect. These are necessarily in very general terms, as, in the ignorance of the designs of Austria and Prussia, and in the uncertainty as to what events each day may produce, it seems impossible to decide definitely at present on the line which we ought to pursue, except as far as relates to Holland. *Perhaps some opening may arise which may enable us to contribute to the termination of the war between the different powers in Europe, leaving France (which, I believe, is the best way) to arrange its own internal affairs as it can.* The whole situation, however, becomes so delicate and critical, that I have thought it right to request the presence of all members of the Cabinet who can, without too much inconvenience, give their attendance."

We know from Noel's communications to Danton that Pitt had six weeks before intimated to the French agent his willingness to undertake a mediation.<sup>2</sup> It is curious to compare with these facts the words of Lord Russell<sup>3</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> [1752–1830. A brother of the first Lord Auckland. At this time he was our representative at Berlin, and held several other similar posts. On his retirement in 1799 he was made Lord Henley.]

<sup>2</sup> Von Sybel, ii. 55. [Noel was an unfrocked priest, born in 1755, at this time on a special mission to England. He filled several similar posts, and eventually settled down to a literary career, as Inspector of Education.]

<sup>3</sup> "Life of Fox," ii. 301.

"The only cure for such an evil, if cure was still possible, was a just interposition between the contending powers. . . . The genius and benevolence of Fox might, in such a spirit, have found the means of sparing to Europe rivers of blood and heaps of treasure."

It was a cruel freak of ill-luck which caused Lord Russell to light upon the very idea which Pitt had suggested to his colleagues, as a text for hypothetically eulogizing the peculiar "genius and benevolence" of Fox. The genius and benevolence in question were at that time more congenially employed in exulting among his friends over the victories of the ruffian Government which had just recovered from the fatigue of massacring its prisoners, and was making preparations for the murder of its King. Mr. Fox, in his familiar letters of that period, declares that not even the reverses of his countrymen in America had pleased him so well. "No!" he exclaims, "no public event, not excepting Saratoga and Yorktown, ever happened that gave me so much delight."<sup>1</sup>

Two things are incontrovertibly clear from this confidential letter from Pitt to his colleague. One is, that even on the 13th of November, 1792, he hoped for peace, and clung to the belief that it was possible; and the other is, that he entertained no project for putting down Jacobinism by force of arms. Nor was he satisfied with mere discussion. On the 16th of November he addressed a communication to the German Courts, requesting them to state the terms upon which they were willing to make peace with France, and offering the good

<sup>1</sup> Fox's "Mem. and Corr." ii. 372.

offices of Great Britain as a mediator.<sup>1</sup> But though he was no "crusader" for a principle, he had to deal with those who were. Three days after the date of this note the Convention issued their famous decree, which was translated by their orders into every European language, offering fraternity and assistance to every nation that desired to rise against its rulers. Two days afterwards another decree declared, in defiance of all treaties, that Savoy was annexed to France. In the face of such evidence as this, it was vain for the English Ministers to flatter themselves that the Convention desired peace. Yet even on the 2nd of December,<sup>2</sup> Maret,<sup>3</sup> who was then in England, writes to his Government that "Mr. Pitt dreads war much more than the aristocracy of the Opposition." Though Pitt was determined that war should not find him unprepared, and took measures accordingly for increasing the national defences, he was careful to do nothing that should justly provoke it.

It is a curious illustration of Mr. Fox's zealous sympathy for his country's enemies that in December, 1792, while the trial of the King with whom we had been in alliance was going on, while the insulting decree of November, inciting all subjects to overthrow their rulers, had but just been issued by the Convention, and when the French troops were making an unprovoked assault upon our allies, he thought it a fit moment for proposing to the

<sup>1</sup> Von Sybel, ii. 56.

<sup>2</sup> "Ann. Reg."

<sup>3</sup> [Maret was at this time on a special mission from the French Government. He became Duc de Bassano and Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1811, was exiled in 1815, returned to France in 1820, and died in 1839.]

House of Commons to recognize the Republic, and to send a minister to Paris. It is also a curious fact that the journalists of the insurrectionary Government in Paris knew of his intention before his friends in England did.<sup>1</sup> But the Convention knew what they were aiming at better than Mr. Fox. The decree of the 19th of November had been meant for a declaration of war, and it was speedily followed up. On the 15th of December Belgium was annexed to France by a decree ; and on the 23rd of January, 1793, M. Chauvelin<sup>2</sup> the French agent, was recalled, though his recall did not reach him till after the English Government, on the receipt of the news of the King's death, had sent to him his passports. But Pitt still harboured no wish for war. Maret arrived in England on the 29th, and Pitt declared to him at the first interview his readiness to negotiate.<sup>3</sup> But the more moderate Girondins had ceased to have any influence in the guidance of affairs at Paris. The die was already cast. On the 29th, the French Government had resolved on war, and on the 1st of February it was formally declared by the Convention.

It is difficult to conceive by what process of perversion the myth of "Pitt's crusade against Jacobinism" grew out of such facts as these. Without a shadow of provocation upon his part, the Convention declared war upon him. The causes they assigned were, that after the 10th of

<sup>1</sup> "Auck. Corr." ii. 482.

<sup>2</sup> [Born in 1766, he had been sent here as ambassador by Louis XVI. in 1792. He was a marquis who had adopted liberal ideas ; and later became a prefect under Napoleon, and Count of the Empire. He died in 1832.]

<sup>3</sup> Von Sybel, ii. 116.

August our ambassador left Paris; that when the King of France ceased to exist, the ambassador who bore his credentials was sent back; and that after the propagandist decree of November, the English army was increased, aliens excluded, and an embargo laid upon corn and military stores. Pitt's only chance, therefore, of avoiding war would have been to have left the English ambassador to be murdered by the *Septembriseurs*, and to have neglected, after the receipt of a formal defiance from the French Convention, to take the ordinary precautions for self-defence. That he did not adopt this course constitutes his provocation. This is Fox's solitary ground for his bitter philippics against the "diabolical principle of the present war." This is the whole of Lord Russell's justification when he taxes Pitt with having undertaken a crusade.

Lord Russell, however, attempts to eke out his case by complaining that Pitt belied his professed neutrality by remonstrating against the French invasion of Flanders, when he had taken no notice of the Austrian invasion of France. It is obvious to reply in the first place that Flanders, and Flanders alone, was the special concern of England; in the second, that remonstrances, whether well or ill founded, are no fair cause of war. But the whole accusation is as baseless as the last. Mr. Pitt never could have remonstrated against the Austrian invasion of France, for the simple reason that France had of her own accord declared war against Austria two months before. Both in the case of England and of Austria it was France that began, and in both cases Lord Russell, misled by the perverse factiousness of Fox, complains of

"unjustifiable invasions" and "crusades." He may, indeed, say that the Declaration of Pillnitz<sup>1</sup> in the year before was a fair cause of war, and constituted Austria the aggressor. But if he does, he falls into this dilemma. The Declaration of Pillnitz, and the decree of the 19th of November, were precisely analogous documents. If one was a fair cause of war, both were. If France, therefore, was right in going to war with Austria in April of 1792, England would have been right in going to war with France in the following November, and *à fortiori* was right in taking precautions against the possibility of war. Lord Russell cannot escape from the admission of one of two alternatives, both of which will probably be equally distasteful to him. Either Fox's French friends must have been wrong in April, or Pitt must have been right in November.

It seems, however, to be of little service to Pitt's memory to multiply proofs that he did not go to war for an idea; for they only furnish to his enemies new weapons of attack. The advocates of Fox, who by force of the term are also censors of Pitt, avail themselves largely of that quaintly Hibernian licence of recording contradictory pleas which is popularly supposed to be the delight of English pleaders. When the news of Mack's surrender at Ulm<sup>2</sup> arrived, Lord Sidmouth announced his intention of attacking his old friend for being "both precipitate and remiss." As Lord Stanhope observes, these epithets "were very convenient because almost contradictory; any specific accusation that would not fit into one basket would be quite sure to find a place in the other." Lord

<sup>1</sup> [Issued in August, 1791, see p. 25.]

<sup>2</sup> [On the 20th of October, 1805.]

Russell and Lord Macaulay have adopted very much the same principles of criticism. They first prove that Pitt went to war for an idea, and blame him for that; and then they prove that he did not go to war for an idea, and blame him for that. Lord Macaulay complains that the war was not vigorous enough for a crusade.

"He went to war; but he would not understand the peculiar character of that war. He was obstinately blind to the plain fact that he was contending against a State which was also a sect, and that the new quarrel between England and France was quite a different kind from the old quarrels about colonies in America and fortresses in the Netherlands."

On the other hand, Lord Russell complains that the war was not disinterested enough for a crusade. He is shocked by the mean and commonplace character of the operations which were conducted upon the principles of ordinary war, and consisted of occupying the territories of the enemy.

"England sought to share the riches and inherit the force of the torn and dismembered monarchy, instead of showing sympathy with the cause of the murdered monarch. . . . When we find the Emperor of Germany appropriating a fortress, and the King of Great Britain conquering an island, we are lost in amazement at the effrontery which could cover a scheme of plunder with the cloak of religion and humanity."<sup>1</sup>

It might have suggested itself to these two distinguished critics that the most probable explanation of these uncrusaderlike proceedings was

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Fox," ii. 378.

that the war never was a crusade at all. The cloak of religion and humanity could cover nothing, because it was never assumed. The whole perplexity has arisen from the inveterate passion of historians for discovering far-fetched reasons when obvious reasons exist. Nothing can be plainer than the case of the English Government in regard to the war of 1793, if it is only allowed to be, what it professed to be, a commonplace war on the ordinary pattern, and is not subjected to the distorting process of a high philosophical explanation. Mr. Pitt was not desirous of war, and did his utmost to preserve neutrality. He did nothing which any fair interpretation could have construed as a provocation to war. On the other hand, he received provocations, in the attack upon our allies and the decree of the 19th of November, which would be looked upon as just cause for war at the present day. Of these provocations he took no practical notice, except by putting England into a condition of defence; and though they left upon his mind no doubt that war must ensue, the declaration, when it did come, came from the Convention, not from him. The war thus begun remained throughout its whole course true to its origin. It was carried on upon the same principles as those on which it was commenced. It was from the first a war of self-defence, not a crusade; and therefore it aimed, after the fashion of all wars, simply at damaging an enemy, not at protecting "religion and humanity." That instead of devoting his efforts to the overthrow of the Republic he at once attacked the strongholds in which Monarchy and Republic had an equal interest, is in itself a sufficient proof that the war was undertaken, not to propagate a set

of principles, but to defend England from her foes.

There is undoubtedly more foundation for the charge that the war when it was begun was conducted feebly. Lord Macaulay characteristically exaggerates its force. The assertion that "the English army under Pitt was the laughing-stock of Europe," and that "his military administration was that of a driveller," is simply rhetoric run mad. Still the accusation of failure is not such a perfect myth as the accusation of having undertaken the war as a crusade, or being driven into it by the fears of the country gentlemen. But it is taking a very long step in argument, on that account, to infer that the blame of the failures must be laid to the door of Pitt, or that in any case they involve the condemnation of his whole military administration. The cause of Pitt's military ill-success may be summed up in one sentence. He had no commanders. The men of the Seven Years' War were dead; the men of the American War were worthless; and the men whom the new war was to train to greatness were still obscure and unknown subalterns. Failing any distinguished name, he had but one choice. The King was unfortunately possessed with the idea, which is common to his order, and which has been the ruin of more than one monarchy in its time, that persons of royal rank must be Heaven-born tacticians. The same delusion was fatal to both the Austrians and the Prussians in this very war; and even Napoleon, with all his vigour of intellect, did not escape from its influence, and was not exempt from its results. The King insisted on the appointment of his son, the Duke of York. Pitt might have guessed that

the Royal scion was, from inexperience, if from no other cause, absolutely incompetent for the work ; but he could suggest no other name to which the same reproach might not in some degree have been applied. And, unhappily, the selection of military commanders was one of the points where the King's habitual good sense wholly failed him. On a later occasion he showed in a still more striking manner how much more he thought of the claims of the officers than of the exigencies of the campaign, when he was selecting a leader for the Peninsular expedition. It was with difficulty that he was prevailed upon in 1809 to suffer even the Indian achievements of Sir Arthur Wellesley to weigh against the claims of some wholly undistinguished seniority.<sup>1</sup>

So the Duke of York was appointed to begin the war in 1793. It does not appear that he was in any way responsible for the miscarriages of that inglorious campaign. On the contrary, he urged upon his allies the march to Paris, which would undoubtedly have brought the war to a very speedy end. But the Prince of Coburg, who had studied tactics in the best books, and had a dim recollection of the Seven Years' War, and Colonel Mack, who even at that early period displayed the aversion to bloodshed for which he afterwards became so famous, showed no admiration for so unscientific a quality as haste. They set about the sieges that were thought requisite with the utmost possible deliberation, and continued to waste their time so adroitly that the favourable opportunity offered by

<sup>1</sup> [See the Cabinet Memorandum to the King, of March 26, 1809, in which the selection of "so young a Lieutenant-General" is defended. "Castlereagh Corr." vii. 43.]

the defection of Dumouriez was allowed to slip away.<sup>1</sup> They succeeded before some towns, and failed before others ; but, long before they had made any impression upon the frontier of France, the French had re-assembled in numbers, and under generals with whom the Prince of Coburg was wholly unequal to cope. After much varying fortune, and many useless evolutions, the campaign was practically brought to a close by Jourdan on the plains of Fleurus.<sup>2</sup> The French entered Brussels, unopposed, in the autumn of 1794, and by the end of the following year were masters of Cologne and Amsterdam.

This untoward result was in no sense the direct fault of the Duke of York ; for if his advice had been followed, matters would probably have taken a different turn. But it was the consequence of his being at the head of the English army, that the English army were obliged to submit to the leadership of such men as the Prince of Coburg and Colonel Mack. The same inglorious fate would have awaited our arms in the Peninsula if Lord Wellington had been compelled to obey the orders of the Portuguese and Spanish generals. The difference in the two cases lay in the position of the English commander. Lord Wellington's tried ability and established fame enabled him to dictate to his Peninsular allies. The Duke of York was probably destitute of military skill, and certainly destitute of reputation ; and therefore his allies

<sup>1</sup> [On March 18, 1793, Dumouriez was defeated by Coburg at Neerwinden, and rode over to the enemy on April 5. It was then that the Duke of York urged the march on Paris, which, as a fact, the French could not have effectually opposed.]

<sup>2</sup> [Where, on June 26, 1794, Coburg was defeated.]

overruled his opinions, and compelled him to follow them to defeat.

But how was this unfortunate state of things the fault of Pitt? England's lamentable indigence of military commanders was shown by the fact that when Pitt had at last prevailed upon the King to recall the Duke of York at the end of 1794, the only officer the English Cabinet could think of to succeed him was Lord Cornwallis, whose most notorious achievement as a soldier was that he had led an English army into the crowning disaster of the most disastrous war that England ever waged.<sup>1</sup> Lord Grenville—who, as Foreign Secretary, had had abundant occasion to turn his mind to these matters—pointedly puts the true state of the case in a confidential letter to his brother in 1799: “What officers have we to oppose to our domestic and external enemies? . . . Some old woman in a red riband.” What is it, then, that those who censure Pitt for the miscarriage of the campaigns of 1793–1794, expect that he should have done? Was he to procure good generals by contract, along with the other army stores? Or was he bound *ex officio* to possess the virtue of second sight, and to discover the future field-marshall under the outer garb of an obscure lieutenant? This last appears to be Lord Macaulay’s view of a Prime Minister’s powers and duties:—

“In such an emergency, and with such means,

<sup>1</sup> [1738–1805. The capitulation at Yorktown in 1781, to which reference is made, was perhaps more the fault of Sir H. Clinton, the Commander-in-Chief, than of Cornwallis. Cornwallis was afterwards Governor-General of India from 1786 to 1793, and Viceroy of Ireland, 1798 to 1801, when he suppressed the rebellion of 1798.]

such a statesman as Richelieu, as Louvois, as Chatham, as Wellesley, would have created in a few months one of the finest armies in the world, and *would soon have discovered and brought forward generals worthy to command such an army.* Germany might have been saved by another Blenheim; Flanders recovered by another Ramillies; another Poitiers might have delivered the Royalist and Catholic provinces of France from a yoke which they abhorred, and might have spread terror even to the barriers of Paris."

That the supply of masterly strategists, as of every other article of human consumption, must always equal the demand, is a dogma which is naturally pleasant to a fervent political economist. But history warrants no such comfortable belief. Again and again in the crisis of a nation's fate, the demand for a great general has been as loud as the terror of approaching ruin could make it; and again and again it has been uttered without avail. Lord Stanhope justly points out that we were not alone in misfortune in the Revolutionary War. If England was the laughing-stock of Europe on account of her military failures during Pitt's administration, assuredly Europe must have begun by being a laughing-stock to herself. Russia never found a successor to Suwarrow.<sup>1</sup> Prussia passed through many a humiliating defeat, and narrowly missed complete national extinction, before she could supply even so imperfect an imitation of the required article as Blücher. Austria, from the first to the last of her many

<sup>1</sup> [Born in 1730, he rose from the ranks till he became field-marshall as a reward for his campaign in Poland. His celebrated campaign in Italy and retreat across the Alps were in 1799, and he died in 1800.]

## DEARTH OF MILITARY TALENT 191

battles with Napoleon, never produced anything more brilliant than the painstaking Archduke Charles. How anxiously did England seek for a great general in the American war, and how deplorably unsuccessful was her search! In truth, Lord Macaulay's ideal picture of the great minister discovering and bringing forward the great general is one to which it would be difficult to discover an historical counterpart, especially at the beginning of a war. Civil rulers are gifted with no special faculties that enable them to discern buried military talent. Clive and Wolfe are the two generals to whom England is indebted for the possession of her two most powerful dependencies; and both of them had actually distinguished themselves and acquired high reputation before they were intrusted with the independent commands which enabled them to gain the victories of Plassey and Quebec. And how little did human design or contrivance do for England in producing the two great heroes who form the pride of her military annals! Humanly speaking, it was mere chance that enabled these two men while they were yet young to struggle to the point where their genius would at once form itself and become known. If one had not been connected with the Court, and the other had not been brother to the Governor-General of India, it is probable that history would have recorded little enough of the exploits of the Duke of Marlborough and the Duke of Wellington.

If under Pitt's administration the English arms achieved no great exploit upon land, it was because he did not possess the instrument by which alone such triumphs can be won. Fortune forges such tools but rarely, and she did not fashion one for

him. It cannot be laid to his charge that he preferred bad commanders when he might have had good, or condemned to inaction any proved military genius. He simply had them not to employ. And a minister can no more save an army from defeat if it has a bad commander, than a shipwright can save from wreck the ship he has built if she has a bad pilot. He never saw a man of real military talent till a few months before his death; and then, as will hereafter appear, he recognized him at once. But if, instead of weighing one by one the result of each individual expedition, we look upon the upshot of his military administration as a whole, there is no ground for being dissatisfied with it. Considering the adversaries he had to oppose and the materials with which he had to work, it did not fall short of what his lofty talents entitled the nation to expect. He had to contend with a people maddened to extraordinary efforts by revolutionary frenzy, and in the latter part of his administration with the overmastering genius of Napoleon. For allies he had rotten, antiquated Governments, too much eaten up by mutual jealousy to work well together, and too much fettered by routine to work efficiently at all. So far as England fought alone, Pitt's administration was brilliantly successful; but when it came to combined or subsidized operations, the issue was very different. The cowardice and irresolution of the French emigrants caused the expedition against Quiberon to miscarry.<sup>1</sup> The mismanagement of the Russian

<sup>1</sup> [In the summer of 1795, owing mainly to the timidity of d'Herville, an emigrant officer who disputed with another, de Puisaye, the command of the expedition, the force which had been landed from British ships at Quiberon, together with thousands of peasants

contingent and the lukewarmness of the Dutch sympathizers were fatal to the expedition to the Helder.<sup>1</sup> These were comparatively trifling failures. It was the collapse of the coalitions which he successfully formed against Napoleon, which has really brought his war administration into disrepute. They caused a lavish waste of English money ; and the only result was to swell Napoleon's power and prestige. But if any one was guiltless of these failures it was Pitt. The policy of subsidized coalitions has been sufficiently justified by the events of 1813. Pitt's conviction that England, standing alone, was unequal to the task of Napoleon's overthrow will hardly be disputed now. Having made up his mind as to right policy, he devoted his best efforts to carrying it out. But the issue was in other hands than his. He could furnish money freely, and contribute naval victories in abundance ; but he could furnish nothing else. He could not subsidize the Aulic Council with energy, or the Prussian Court with courage, or the Russian Emperor with common sense. Lord Castlereagh afterwards succeeded where Pitt had failed, simply because in the interval the moral contrast of the two combatants was no longer what it had been. But in 1805 Napoleon had not yet learnt to outstrip even his antagonists in presumption and false security, and they had not acquired that slight accession of vigour and public spirit with which

who had joined it, was annihilated by the Republican troops under Hoche.]

<sup>1</sup> [In August, 1799, an expedition under the Duke of York was sent to the Helder, and was there joined by a Russian contingent. Contrary to expectation, the Dutch did not rise ; and owing to this, and to want of co-operation by the Russians, nothing of importance was achieved except the capture of the Dutch fleet.]

they were at last imbued by the schooling of disaster. It is hard justice to visit their errors upon Pitt. His merits should rather have been set off, in the eyes of impartial historians, by their foil. If England showed herself superior to the purposeless policy and impotent administration by which they were involved in so much calamity and disgrace, it must be attributed to the guidance of Pitt. She owes to him the great fact, upon which all her present pre-eminence is built, that alone among European nations, the outbreak of Napoleon's ambition did not find her unprepared.

In any case it is but common justice to admit that, if Pitt is to bear the full blame of our military failures, he has a right to the full glory of our naval triumphs. Lord Macaulay's is a Lesbian rule. When the army and its success are in question, the Prime Minister is all in all, and the War Office is ignored. When the victories of the navy are to be disposed of, the Prime Minister suddenly becomes a cypher, and everything depends upon the Admiralty. When operations succeed, the subordinate Minister is praised; when they fail, the Prime Minister is blamed. The reason of this arrangement is obvious enough. The Prime Minister was Pitt, Fox's great opponent; the First Lord of the Admiralty was Lord Spencer, for a long time Fox's staunchest friend. But it is not thus that posterity will judge. They will not accommodate their verdict to the interests of the great Whig connection. It must be granted that where Pitt had none but worthless instruments to work with, he achieved little; and that where he was forced to fight with the arms of foreigners, he lamentably failed. But, in spite of these draw-

backs, it was under his administration that England achieved some of her most splendid triumphs, and tided over the crisis of the deadliest struggle in which she has ever been engaged. History will never stigmatize as inglorious a rule under which the First of June, St. Vincent, the Nile, Camperdown, Copenhagen,<sup>1</sup> and Trafalgar were won. The situation which Pitt bequeathed to his successors bore no marks of a "driveller's" administration. The French troops had been repulsed from Syria, and driven out of Egypt;<sup>1</sup> the French fleets were destroyed, the French flag could not show itself on the open sea; and the preparations for an invasion of England—the most formidable that ever threatened her, and of whose probable performances Napoleon had confidently boasted, "*Si nous sommes maîtres douze heures de la traversée, l'Angleterre a vécu*"—had been foiled, dispersed, and laid aside.

The battle of Trafalgar—the last triumph of British valour that Pitt lived to see—marked the turning-point of the war. The task which Pitt's successors had to fulfil was very different from that which he successfully carried through. The struggle was still for life and death, and the exertions which it exacted were stupendous. But it was waged upon a distant theatre, and only the echo of its ravages was perceptible in England. English statesmen no longer fought with the ever-present fear of invasion before their eyes. It was a question of patience and perseverance—of the success with which English endurance would wear

<sup>1</sup> Copenhagen and Alexandria were actually won in the commencement of Addington's administration; but the expeditions were planned, prepared, and despatched by Pitt.

out the *élan* of Napoleon. The national existence of England no longer hung upon the vigilance of an admiral or the hazard of a wind. The administration of the “driveller” had broken the back of the war. When Pitt died, he left a vast residue for his successors to complete. But he had barred the road to India ; he had annexed Malta, the Cape, Ceylon, and many other colonies to the British Crown ; he had secured that the rich fountains of trade should remain open to England ; he had cut off its supplies from the ports of France ; and he had reduced all hopes of invasion to an idle dream. It must be admitted that, for a mere driveller, these were very respectable results.

If it had not been for Pitt's untimely death, the world would have heard less of the failure of his war administration. If he had been allowed to gather the natural fruit of his own policy, he would have enjoyed the glory of it as a whole. He would have earned his due share of the renown with which England emerged from the long, exhausting trial, through whose earlier and darker stages he had guided her. But he was only suffered to lay the foundations on which others built ; he sowed that others might reap. By a strange injustice, his memory has been reproached with the luxuriance of the harvest which he himself prepared. Later triumphs have been supposed to detract by their contrast from his fame, as though none of their glory were due to the Minister who gained for England the security that enabled her to achieve them.

Pitt's death was so unlooked for, it was an incident so startling at the very crisis of a drama so terrible, and it was looked upon at the time

as an event so calamitous to his country, that its circumstances have attracted the interest of historians in a very peculiar degree. All the minute incidents which it is usually the sad solace of sorrowing friends to collect have, in his case, become matter of historical record. Some of them have even become subjects of historical controversy. All of them are collected here, with many more that have never been given to the world before. Lord Stanhope has enjoyed peculiar opportunities of adding fresh touches to the well-known picture. The Duke of Wellington was staying in the same house with Pitt shortly before his death, and has communicated to Lord Stanhope several interesting details. The biographer's own father<sup>1</sup> lived in constant intercourse with him, and was one of his latest correspondents, and his uncle Mr. James Stanhope<sup>2</sup> stood by the Minister's death-bed and heard his last words. Lord Stanhope's narrative leaves upon the mind the impression that the popular idea of Pitt's having died from mere exhaustion is scarcely founded in fact. He was feeble throughout his life, and perhaps more feeble during the last six years of it: and the early age at which he began the laborious life of a Prime Minister would almost prepare one to believe that he must have been early worn out, whether he actually was so or not. The real cause of his death was his hereditary malady the gout, from which he was a sufferer almost before he left college. In one sense his work killed him, in that

<sup>1</sup> [1781-1855. Son of Charles, 3rd Earl, by his second wife, Miss Grenville, daughter of the younger brother of Earl Temple. He sat in Parliament from 1806 to 1816. He was very eccentric.]

<sup>2</sup> [1788-1825. A Captain and Lieut-Colonel in the Guards.]

it did not allow him to apply the usual remedies in time. The isolation in which Lord Grenville had left him for the sake of reading to the King a practical lecture upon obstinacy, had thrown the whole burden of Government upon his shoulders: and the danger which threatened England was too closely imminent to allow him any lengthened intermission of his labour. The application of the Bath waters, the customary remedy of the time for his disease, became in his case an impossibility. The gout does not appear to have been the special result of his official labours: for it had fastened on him before those labours began, and continued to cling to him after they had closed. One of his severest fits attacked him in 1803, when he had been free from the labours of office for two years. In the autumn of 1804 it returned again, and his physicians strongly pressed on him a sojourn at Bath. But it was impossible for him to leave at that crisis, even for a week, the momentous duties which depended wholly upon his exertions. We find Lord Grenville at this period ridiculing him for his activity in superintending the military preparations against the expected invader! “Can anything,” he writes, “equal the ridicule of Pitt’s riding about from Downing Street to Wimbledon, and from Wimbledon to Cox Heath, to inspect military carriages, impregnable batteries, and Lord Chatham’s reviews? Can he possibly be serious in expecting Bonaparte now?” His alliance with Fox had not lasted very long, but in point of patriotic sentiment he was an apt scholar in his new master’s school. As a matter of fact, we know now from the researches of M. Thiers that the very day this letter was written, the 25th of August, 1804, was just

about the time that Napoleon had fixed for the invasion of England, and that he entertained so little doubt of its success, that he had actually caused the medals to be struck that were to be issued after its accomplishment, with the inscription, "*Frappé à Londres en 1804.*" But Lord Grenville, who was lounging at Dropmore between his garden and his library, knew, or chose to know, nothing of all this. Four or five years earlier he would not have sneered at the danger of invasion, or at a Minister's activity in providing against even the chance of it; but it was his sincere belief that there was something eminently ridiculous in an attempt to carry on the Government without his aid. He had not recovered the mortification of discovering that even his own refusal to take office without Fox had not forced the King to an unconditional surrender.

But in the mean time the anxiety and toil, at which Grenville was comfortably sneering, bore heavily upon Pitt. He obtained no interval of repose throughout the whole recess, and was forced to begin another Session with the gout still hanging about him. That Session chanced to be singularly trying. It was the Session in which the House of Commons employed itself in the task of hunting down Lord Melville. Now that the lapse of time has disengaged the question from the partisan feelings of the moment, no one believes Lord Melville to have been guilty of any dishonourable act. His own culpability was confined to the fact that he was charged with expending both the Navy money and a portion of the secret-service money, and did not keep the two accounts very carefully apart. As a necessary consequence, being bound to secrecy

with respect to one portion of the expenditure, he could not give the House of Commons a very clear account of the items that were intermingled with it. But under cover of this general laxity, his paymaster, Mr. Trotter, had been guilty of actual malversation. It was a very fair case for an Opposition to take up. Unfortunately, Lord Melville's enemies were not confined to the Opposition. Addington—now Lord Sidmouth—had become his colleague; but Lord Melville had been among those who contributed to the fall of the Addington administration, and Lord Sidmouth was not a man who easily forgave. Wilberforce, too, and others of the independent members, were glad to make an example of Lord Melville at a time when suspicions of administrative malversation were very general, and not, perhaps, very unjust. In this state of feeling Pitt was unable to muster a majority for the purpose of defending his early friend. Lord Melville was condemned by the Speaker's casting vote.<sup>1</sup> It was a crushing blow to Pitt. Lord Fitzharris,<sup>2</sup> who was sitting next him at the time the numbers were announced from the chair, relates how he failed, under the first shock of the disappointment, to repress emotions of which few living men had ever seen the signs. "Pitt immediately put on the little cocked hat that he was in the habit of wearing when dressed for the evening, and jammed it deeply over his forehead; and I distinctly saw the tears trickling down his cheeks." A few nights afterwards he acknowledged to the House that the punishment of Lord Melville had given him "a deep and bitter pang." Lord Macaulay had heard from several spectators an

<sup>1</sup> [On the morning of April 9, 1805.]

<sup>2</sup> [See p 130.]

## WEAKNESS OF THE MINISTRY 201

account of the scene when these words were uttered. "As Pitt uttered the word 'pang,' his lip quivered, his voice shook, he paused, and his hearers thought that he was about to burst into tears. He suppressed his emotion, however, and proceeded with his usual majestic self-possession."

Pitt, in spite of his cold manners, was a man of intense feelings ; and the very restraint in which he usually held them gave to them, when they did escape from his control, a violence against which his physical strength was unequal to bear up. From this time forward we hear a good deal more of his failing health and of the necessity for repose. But yet there were no symptoms to alarm his friends or to inspire his enemies with hope. In August Fox speaks of "an appearance of extreme uneasiness, and almost misery." On Michaelmas Day, Lord Sidmouth writes that "Pitt looked tolerable well, but had been otherwise." The King himself never suspected the imminence of the calamity that was impending over him. Pitt visited him at Weymouth, and strongly urged a reconstruction of the Ministry on a comprehensive principle. He had felt the numerical weakness of the Government in the Melville debates, and dreaded the results to the national security of any passing clamour or panic. Mr. George Rose spoke still more plainly. He told the King, if Mr. Pitt should be confined by the gout for only two or three weeks "there would be an end of us." But the King refused to believe in the gout, and Mr. Rose found him more impracticable than ever. The gout, however, was all this time making formidable, though unobserved, progress. The physicians were constantly urging him again to try the waters of

Bath ; but the press of business and the urgency of the crisis were as severe as they had been the year before. The army of Boulogne was still threatening the shores of England, and Pitt could not venture to absent himself for any length of time from London. No one, however, appears to have been even anxious except his physicians. In the end of October he paid a visit to his colleague Lord Camden,<sup>1</sup> at the Wilderness, in Kent, and there he chanced to meet Sir Arthur Wellesley. In after years the Duke of Wellington gave to Lord Stanhope in conversation his reminiscences of that too brief acquaintance, and Lord Stanhope has printed the notes of the conversation, which he took down at the time. Considering who were the two individuals concerned, we shall make no apology for extracting these notes at length. It is to be observed that the Duke makes a mistake in speaking of the visit as having taken place in November. Pitt was in London the whole of November.

"The Duke and I spoke of Mr. Pitt, lamenting his early death. 'I did not think,' said the Duke, 'that he would have died so soon. He died in January, 1806 ; and I met him at Lord Camden's, in Kent, and I think that he did not seem ill, in the November previous. He was extremely lively, and in good spirits. It is true that he was *by way* of being an invalid at that time. A great deal was always said about his taking his rides—for he used then to ride eighteen or twenty miles every day—and great pains were taken to send forward his luncheon, bottled porter, I think, and getting him a beef-steak or mutton chop ready at some place fixed

<sup>1</sup> [1759–1840. Only son of the celebrated Chancellor. Pitt's Secretary for War in 1804–05 and President of the Council, 1805–06. He was made a Marquis in 1812.]

beforehand. That place was always mentioned to the party, so that those kept at home in the morning might join the ride there if they pleased. On coming home from these rides, they used to put on dry clothes, and hold a Cabinet, for all the party were members of the Cabinet, except me and, I think, the Duke of Montrose. At dinner Mr. Pitt drank little wine ; but it was at that time the fashion to sup, and he then took a great deal of port-wine and water.

"In the same month I also met Mr. Pitt at the Lord Mayor's dinner ; he did not seem ill. On that occasion I remember he returned thanks in one of the best and neatest speeches I ever heard in my life. It was in very few words. The Lord Mayor had proposed his health as one who had been the saviour of England, and would be the saviour of the rest of Europe. Mr. Pitt then got up, disclaimed the compliment as applied to himself, and added, "England has saved herself by her exertions, and the rest of Europe will be saved by her example!" That was all : he was scarcely up two minutes ; yet nothing could be more perfect.

"I remember another curious thing at that dinner. Erskine was there. Now, Mr. Pitt had always over Erskine a great ascendancy—the ascendancy of terror. Sometimes, in the House of Commons, he could keep Erskine in check by merely putting out his hand or making a note. At this dinner, Erskine's health having been drunk, and Erskine rising to return thanks, Pitt held up his finger, and said to him across the table, "Erskine! remember that they are drinking your health as a distinguished Colonel of Volunteers." Erskine, who had intended, as we heard, to go off upon Rights of Juries, the State Trials, and other political points, was quite put out ; he was awed like a school-boy at school, and in his speech kept strictly within the limits enjoined him."

It was not till the foreign news became disastrous that his disease began to take a dangerous turn. The first blow was Mack's capitulation at Ulm. It was an act of cowardice wholly beyond an Englishman's calculations to foresee, and it offered a gloomy omen of the approaching fate of the Coalition upon which Pitt had staked so much. It affected him as no other event had ever affected him before, except the public disgrace of his early friend. It at first reached England only in the form of a vague rumour. Pitt absolutely refused to credit it. "Don't believe a word of it; it's all a fiction," he said almost peevishly, loud enough to be heard by the whole company, at a dinner at which the report was being discussed. But the next day—the 3rd of November—which happened to be a Sunday, a Dutch newspaper came to the Foreign Office, containing an account of the capitulation. Pitt could not read Dutch, and none of the clerks who could were in the way. So they went off to Lord Malmesbury for an interpretation, and he read out to them the fatal news. "I observed," he writes in his journal, "but too clearly the effect it had on Pitt, though he did his utmost to conceal it. This was the last time I saw him. The visit left an indelible impression on my mind, as his manner and look were not his own, and gave me, in spite of myself, a foreboding of the loss with which we were threatened." This must have been the look which Wilberforce used, in after days, pathetically to call the "Austerlitz look;" for, as Lord Stanhope dryly observes, "The expression was striking and well chosen, but not strictly accurate, since Wilberforce never once saw Pitt after the battle of Austerlitz was fought."

No dangerous effect, however, followed from this shock : as we have seen, Sir Arthur Wellesley saw him a week later at the Lord Mayor's dinner, and did not think him looking ill. Early in December, he found time at last to go down to Bath. The object of his physicians was to bring out the gout, which had been flying about him for some time, in the form of a regular fit. The Bath waters did their duty ; and a good fit of gout soon made its appearance in his foot. During this time his spirits were good, and his cure was visibly progressing. He seems to have amused himself in his unwonted leisure with the somewhat uncongenial task of criticizing the poetical effusions of his friends. Canning sent him a poem inspired by Trafalgar, together with a string of critical questions for him to answer. Lord Mulgrave,<sup>1</sup> his colleague in the Cabinet, was also staying at Bath ; and he was induced by Dr. Calcott<sup>2</sup> to employ his leisure time in supplying the words for a patriotic song—the musician being wisely of opinion that a Cabinet Minister's name on the back of a song would make it sell, whatever the merit of the poetry might be. Upon this Ministerial performance, Pitt was called on to pass a critical judgment. He seems to have taken a purely political view of the subject ; and accordingly, bearing in mind the precedent of despatches and votes of thanks, he pronounced that the second in command ought to be noticed as well as the chief. He is even said to have supplied the

<sup>1</sup> [1755–1831. He was Pitt's Chancellor of the Duchy in 1804, and succeeded Lord Harrowby as Foreign Secretary in 1805. Except during the "All the Talents" Ministry he remained in the Cabinet till 1820.]

<sup>2</sup> [1766–1821. He was a musical composer and writer on music, best known as a glee writer. He died mad.]

defect by the addition of a stanza of his own—which, if his reputation depended on his poetry, would certainly have justified the hypothesis that his intellect was giving way. The verses are execrably tame, and not altogether intelligible. The fact, however, only rests upon the bare assertion of one of Lord Mulgrave's sons, unsupported by any proof; and Lord Stanhope thinks it better, for the credit of his hero, to discredit the genuineness of this poetic effort altogether.

But this promise of recovery was speedily cut short. Just at the crisis of the malady, a report reached England that the Coalition had gained an overwhelming victory at some place in Moravia. For a time the rumour was generally believed. Even the Ministers did not suspect it, and reported it to the King as an undoubted fact. Close after it followed the melancholy truth—that the overwhelming victory was upon Napoleon's side, and that the costly Coalition, from which so much had been expected, was at an end. The shock was too much for Mr. Pitt's critical condition. As soon as he had read the despatches, he asked for a map, and desired to be left alone. He was left for a long time to his reflections upon the disheartening news: and he rose up from them a doomed man. The malady under which he was suffering, and which is particularly susceptible to violent emotion, received an impetus which could never afterwards be checked. It left his extremities, and turned inwards upon some vital organ; and from that moment a growing debility set in, from which he never rallied. As Canning said some days later, “It was the relapse of a single day that reduced Mr. Pitt to the wreck he now is.”

After this the end came rapidly. At first he did not see it himself, and talked as if he only doubted whether he should recover in time for the beginning of the Session. But he began to be aware of what was impending sooner than his friends, and apparently sooner than his physicians. The day before he left Bath—a fortnight before his death—he said to Lord Melville, "I wish the King may not repent, and sooner than he thinks, the rejection of the advice I pressed on him at Weymouth." But by the time he had arrived at Putney it was too evident to all. The symptom which was most alarming to unprofessional observers was the total loss of those splendid tones which in public and in private had always fascinated his hearers. His voice had become weak and tremulous. His emaciation was so great that his countenance was utterly changed. For a day or two he still was supposed to be well enough to write letters, and to see some of his political friends. His last conversation upon public affairs was with Lord Wellesley, who had just returned from India: and one of the last subjects of that conversation was his commendation of Sir Arthur Wellesley. "I never met," he said, "any military officer with whom it was so satisfactory to converse. He states every difficulty before he undertakes any service, but none after he has undertaken it." There was something almost prophetic in this his dying description of the combined caution and courage which ultimately carried on to victory the task that he was leaving incomplete. But this interview and these topics were more than his strength could bear. He fainted away before Lord Wellesley had left the room. Lord Wellesley saw

that the hand of death was upon him, and warned Lord Grenville of what was coming. "He received the fatal intelligence in an agony of tears, and immediately determined that all hostility in Parliament should be suspended." Such is Lord Wellesley's account of the effect of the intelligence upon Pitt's former colleague. His ancient rival Fox received it, if his own account may be trusted, with more philosophy. "He was not much for delicacies at any time," he told the Speaker; "but there were some he found who felt a difficulty while the reports were so very strong of Mr. Pitt's extreme state."<sup>1</sup> It was but seven months more, and he was lying in the same state himself.

The closing scene is best described in the words of Lord Stanhope's uncle, who stood by the side of the death-bed :—

"After this was concluded, Mr. Pitt begged to be left alone, and he remained composed and apparently asleep for two or three hours. Doctors Baillie and Reynolds<sup>2</sup> arrived about three, and gave as their opinion that Mr. Pitt could not live above twenty-four hours. Our own feelings in losing our only protector, who had reared us with more than parental care, I need not attempt to describe.

"From Wednesday morning I did not leave his room except for a few minutes till the time of his death, though I did not allow him to see me, as I felt myself unequal to the dreadful scene of parting with him, and feared (although he was given over) that the exertion on his part might hasten the dreadful event which now appeared inevitable. Hester<sup>3</sup> applied for leave to see him, but was

<sup>1</sup> "Colch. Diaries," vol. ii. p. 28.   <sup>2</sup> [The King's physicians.]

<sup>3</sup> [Lady Hester Stanhope, 1776–1839. The eldest daughter of the 3rd Earl Stanhope by his first wife, Pitt's sister.]

refused. Taking, however, the opportunity of Sir Walter's<sup>1</sup> being at dinner, she went into Mr. Pitt's room. Though even then wandering a little, he immediately recollected her, and with his usual angelic mildness wished her future happiness, and gave her a most solemn blessing and affectionate farewell. On her leaving the room I entered it, and for some time afterwards Mr. Pitt continued to speak of her, and several times repeated, 'Dear soul, I know she loves me! Where is Hester? Is Hester gone?' In the evening Sir Walter gave him some champagne, in hopes of keeping up for a time his wasting and almost subdued strength; and as Mr. Pitt seemed to feel pain in swallowing it, owing to the thrush in his throat, Sir Walter said: 'I am sorry, sir, to give you pain. Do not take it unkind.' Mr. Pitt, with that mildness which adorned his private life, replied: 'I never take anything unkind that is meant for my good.' At three o'clock on Wednesday Colonel Taylor<sup>2</sup> arrived express from His Majesty at Windsor, and returned with the melancholy [news] of all hopes having ceased. I remained the whole of Wednesday night with Mr. Pitt. His mind seemed fixed on the affairs of the country, and he expressed his thoughts aloud, though sometimes incoherently. He spoke a good deal concerning a private letter from Lord Harrowby<sup>3</sup> and frequently inquired the direction of the wind; then said, answering himself, 'East; ah! that will do; that will bring him quick:' at other times seemed to be in conversation with a messenger, and sometimes cried out, 'Hear,

<sup>1</sup> [Sir Walter Farquhar, 1738-1819; the noted physician created a baronet and Physician-in-Ordinary to the Prince of Wales in 1796.]

<sup>2</sup> [1775-1839. Afterwards Lieut.-Gen. Sir Herbert Taylor, G.C.B. At this time secretary to the King.]

<sup>3</sup> [1762-1847. He had been Pitt's Foreign Secretary in 1804, and was at this time on a peace mission to Berlin, Vienna, and Petersburg.]

